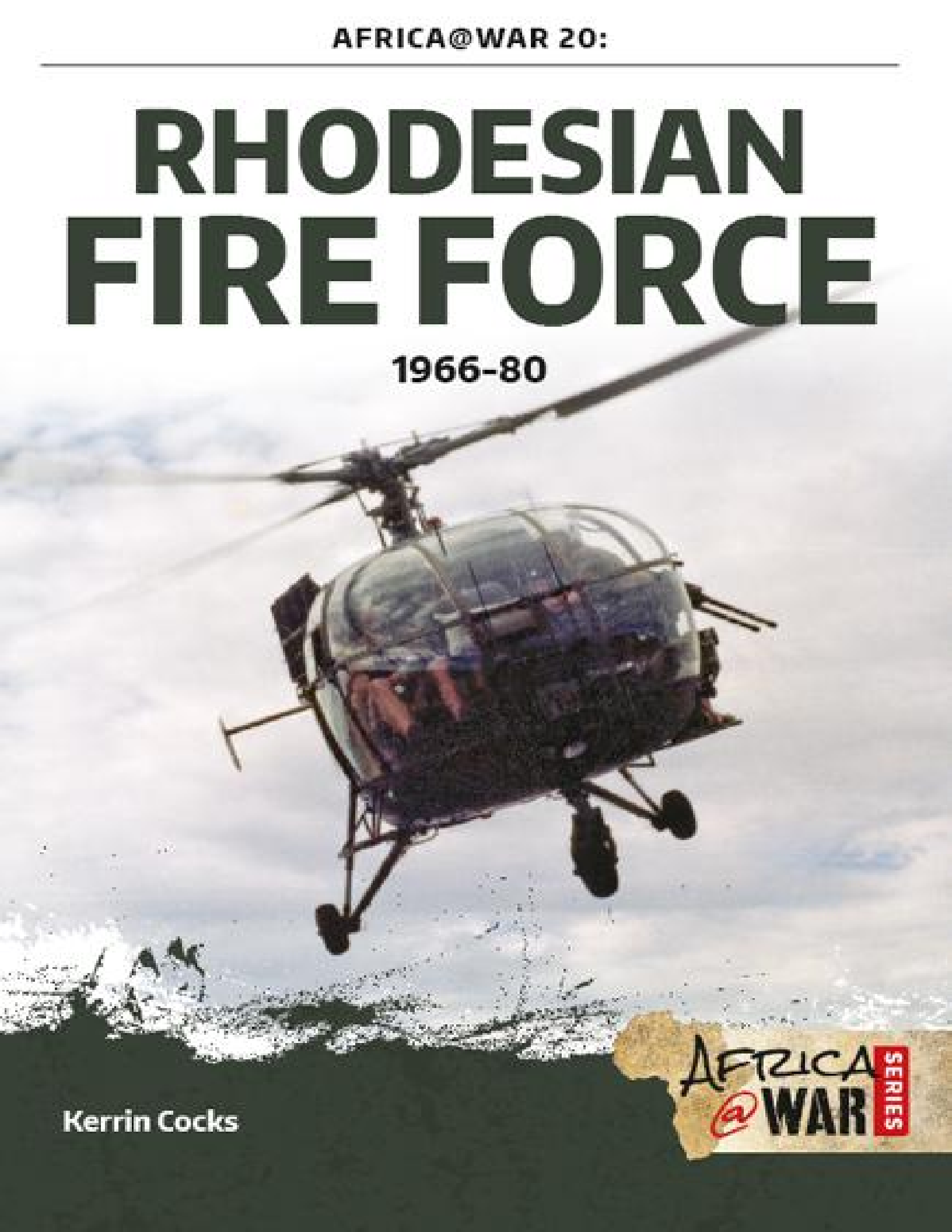
AFRICA@WAR 20:

RHODESIAN FIRE FORCE

1966-80



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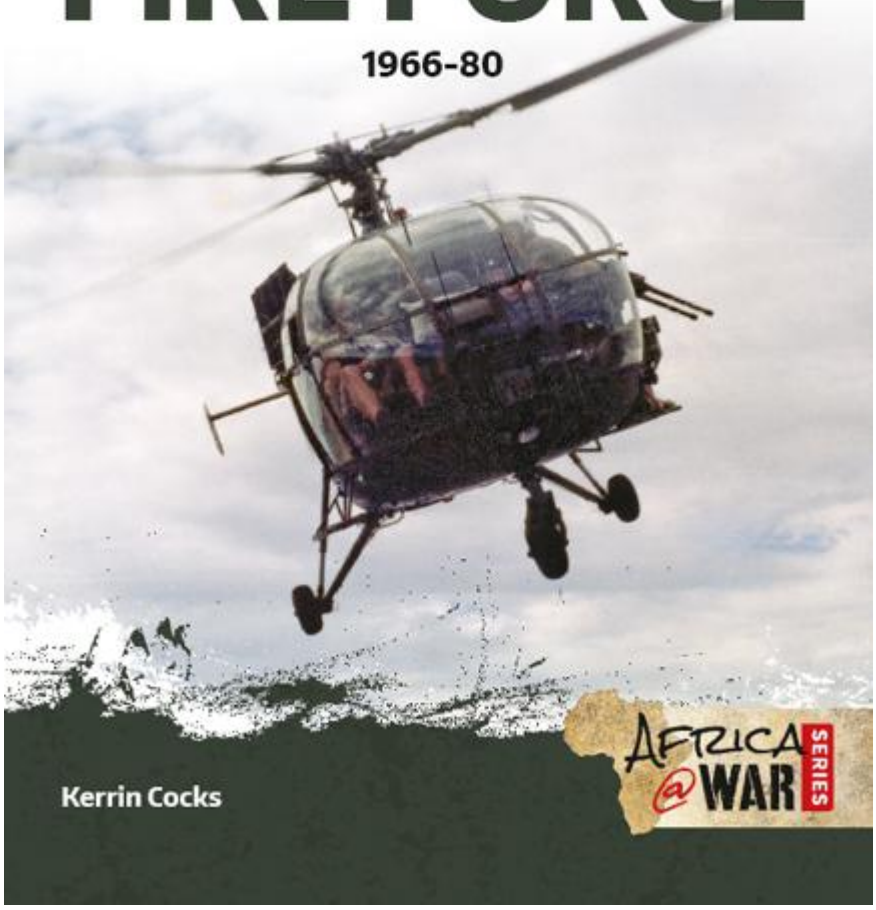

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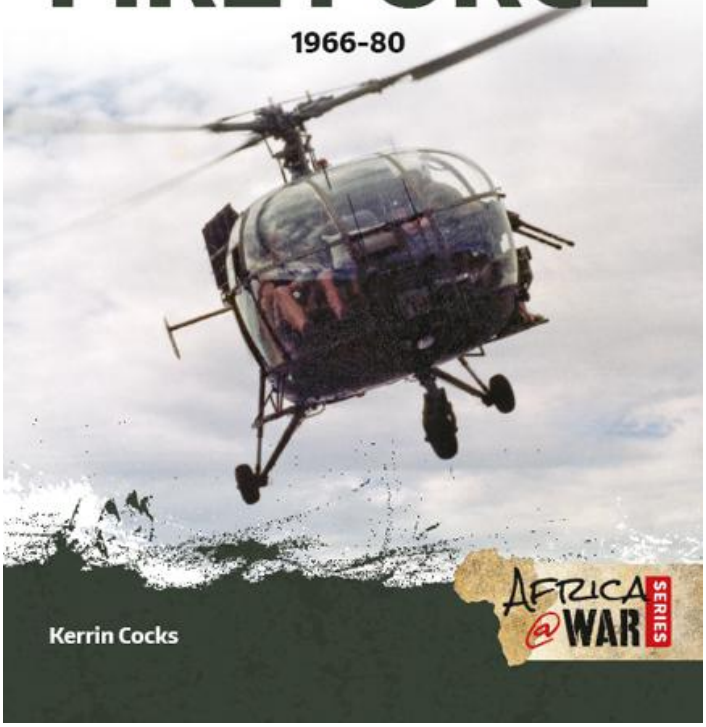

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Front cover photo: Fire Force Grand Reef, December 1979.
Courtesy Jean-Michel Caffin

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GLOSSARY

AFB	air force base
AP	assembly point
ATC	air traffic control
ATW	Anti-Tracking Wing
BSAP	British South Africa Police
casevac	casualty evacuation
CID	Central Investigation Department
CO	commanding officer
Coy	Company
CQ	commando / company quartermaster
CSM	commando / company sergeant-major
Dak	Douglas ‘Dakota’ C-47 / DC-3
DZ	drop zone (paratroopers and para supplies)
FAC	forward air controller
FAF	forward airfield
FASOC	forward air support operations centre
G-Car	troop-carrying, ground-attack helicopter / gunship
GSU	General Service Unit
INTAF	internal affairs
IP	initial point (starting position of jet run-in to attack)
HE	high explosive
HQ	headquarters
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JSPIS	Joint Services Photo-Interpretation Services
K-Car	command helicopter / ‘killer’ car
KIA	killed in action
Locstat	location state, i.e. position
LZ	landing zone (helicopters)
MA3	commando / company medic

MID	Military Intelligence Services
MSU	mobile surgical unit
NCO	non-commissioned officer
OP	observation post
para	paratrooper
PATU	Police Anti-Terrorist Unit
PJI	parachute jump instructor
PR	Police Reserve
PRI	photo recce interpreter
PRAW	Police Reserve Air Wing
PV	protected village
RAR	Rhodesian African Rifles
R&R	rest & recuperation
ratpack	ration pack
RLI	Rhodesian Light Infantry
RR	Rhodesia Regiment
RSF	Rhodesian security forces
RSM	regimental sergeant major
SAAF	South African Air Force
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAANC	South African African Nation Congress
SAP	South African Police
SB	Special Branch (of BSAP)
SCR	Silver Cross of Rhodesia
SOP	standard operating procedure
Strela	SAM 7 anti-aircraft missile
STO	station (or senior) technical officer
SWO	station warrant officer
TCU	Tracking Combat Unit
TF	Territorial Force
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
VAT	Volunteers for Advanced Training
VR	Volunteer Reserve
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANU's military wing)

ZANU Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIPRA Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZAPU's military wing)

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CONTACT!

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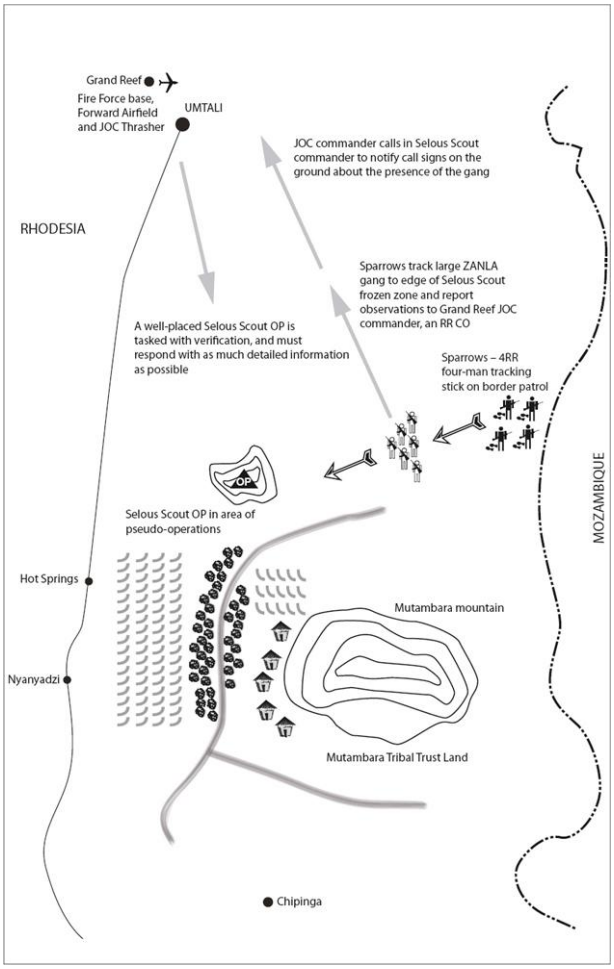
On a day in early 1978 a four-man tracking stick from the 4th (Manicaland) Battalion Rhodesia Regiment (4RR), known as Sparrows, is on patrol on the Rhodesian eastern border just north of the Mutambara mountains and adjoining the eponymous TTL. The stick is tasked with identifying and tracking spoor coming across the border from Mozambique. Acting on information received by the BSAP Special Branch, they are specifically focused on picking up any sign of a large cross-border incursion of ZANLA troops, anywhere between 50 and 60 men.

The Sparrows are quick to pick up the signs left by a large group moving through the bush. On first assessment, the tracks are deemed three to four days' old and the stick tracks them to the outer reaches of the TTL where visual confirmation of their existence and numbers are established.

More than this they cannot do as the area is known to be 'frozen' by the Selous Scouts, meaning no other military or paramilitary units may enter for fear of compromising any pseudo operations the Scouts may be engaged in.

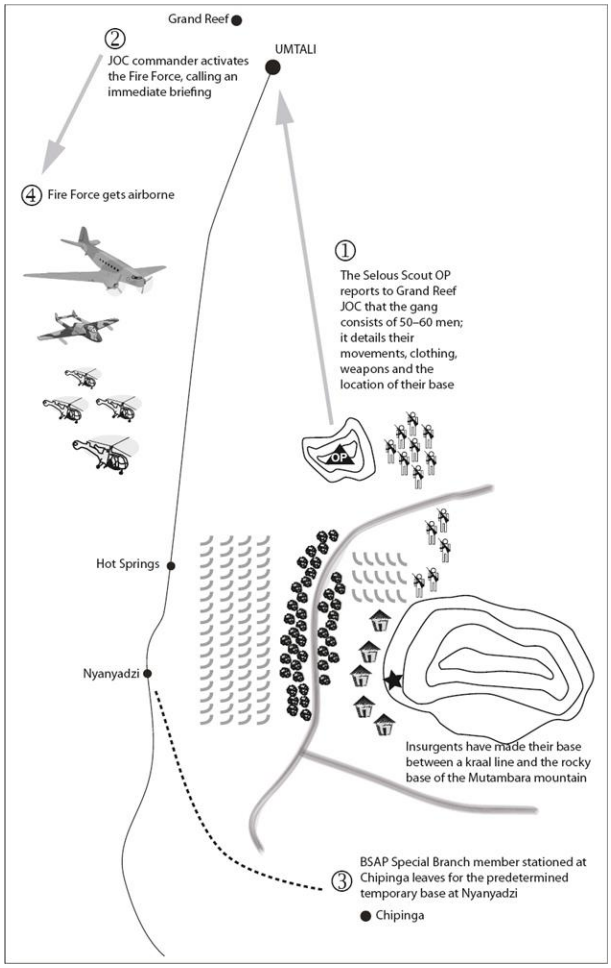
Thus the four-man RR stick relays this information to the JOC commander at Grand Reef Fire Force base. That commander relays the information to the Selous Scout commander who will notify his men of the approaching gang.


Grand Reef
Fire Force base,
Forward Airfield
and JOC Thrasher
UMTALI
JOC commander calls in Selous Scout commander to notify call signs on the ground about the presence of the gang
RHODESIA
Sparrows track large ZANLA gang to edge of Selous Scout frozen zone and report observations to Grand Reef JOC commander, an RR CO
A well-placed Selous Scout OP is tasked with verification, and must respond with as much detailed information as possible
Sparrows – 4RR four-man tracking stick on border patrol
MOZAMBIQUE
Selous Scout OP in area of pseudo-operations
Hot Springs
Mutambara mountain
Nyanyadzi
Mutambara Tribal Trust Land
Chipinga

A few days later a Selous Scout OP has the gang visual and establishes that they are basing up in the southwestern foothills of the Mutambara mountains. North of the TTL and offset slightly to the west is a hill with a superior elevation on which the six-man Selous Scout OP is located. The topography of the area is varied: it is relatively mountainous, with valleys, ravines and local settlements with huts and mielie (maize) fields. Due to the summer rains the bush is dense and the vegetation thick.

The Selous Scout OP sighting and observations of the gang are relayed to the JOC commander at Grand Reef—at this point the area is unfrozen—and immediately the base, already at a high state of readiness, is called to action. The JOC commander—at Grand Reef this was the CO of 4RR—summons the Fire Force commander (an

RLI major), the air force commander (a squadron leader) and the RLI base CSM. The information is relayed and the base siren sounds, activating the Fire Force.


Grand Reef
② JOC commander activates the Fire Force, calling an immediate briefing
UMTALI
④ Fire Force gets airborne
① The Selous Scout OP reports to Grand Reef JOC that the gang consists of 50–60 men; it details their movements, clothing, weapons and the location of their base
OP
Hot Springs
Nyanyadzi
Insurgents have made their base between a kraal line and the rocky base of the Mutambara mountain
③ BSAP Special Branch member stationed at Chipinga leaves for the predetermined temporary base at Nyanyadzi
Chipinga

On the tarmac is the K-Car with three G-Cars lined up behind it, as well as the Para Dakota and the Lynx. RLI Stops 1, 2 and 3 are lined up at their respective G-Cars with each helicopter's gunner-technician; the five para sticks—three RLI and two RAR—are lined up in order of embarkation at the Dakota with the aircraft dispatchers, and the Landtail, commanded by the base CSM, is idling, ready to move out.

After a five-minute briefing in the JOC operations room, the Fire Force gets airborne and the Landtail leaves. The K-Car leads with the G-

Cars and the Lynx following; the Dakota waits as its flying time is quicker and will depart 20 minutes after the K-Car.

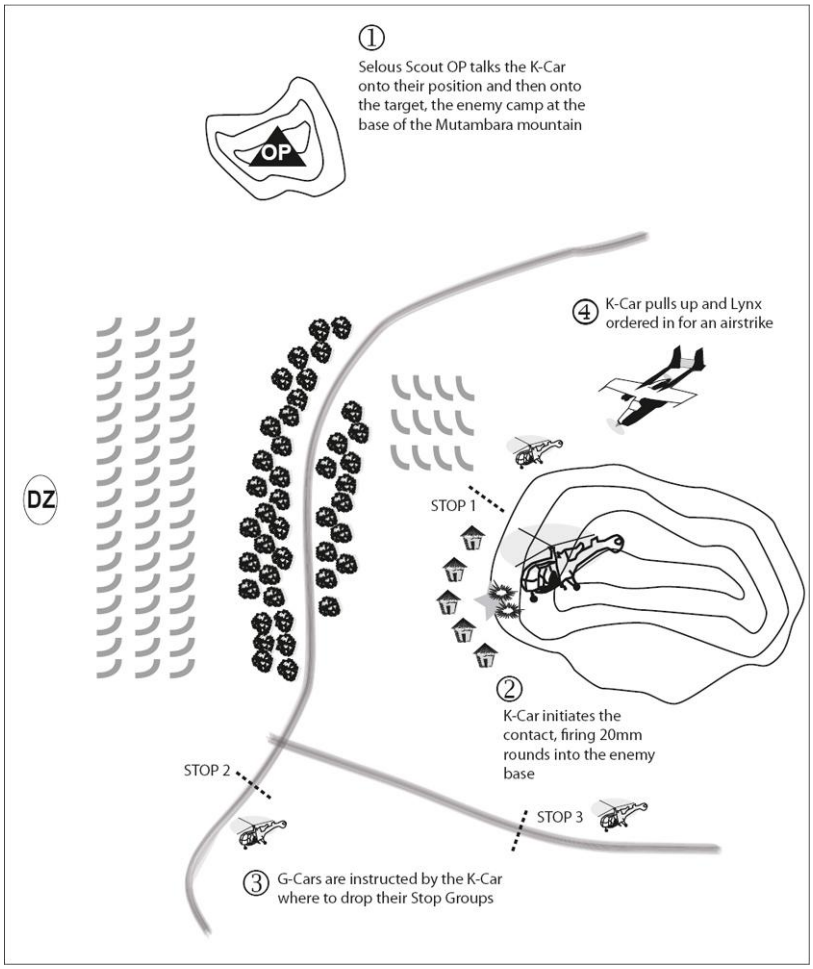
As the target area is between 30 and 40 minutes' flying time from Grand Reef, Nyanyadzi is identified as a suitable temporary base for the Fire Force. It houses a police station and a dirt airstrip and is commanded by a BSAP section officer, assisted by a Ground Coverage operator, and is stocked with prepositioned aviation fuel.

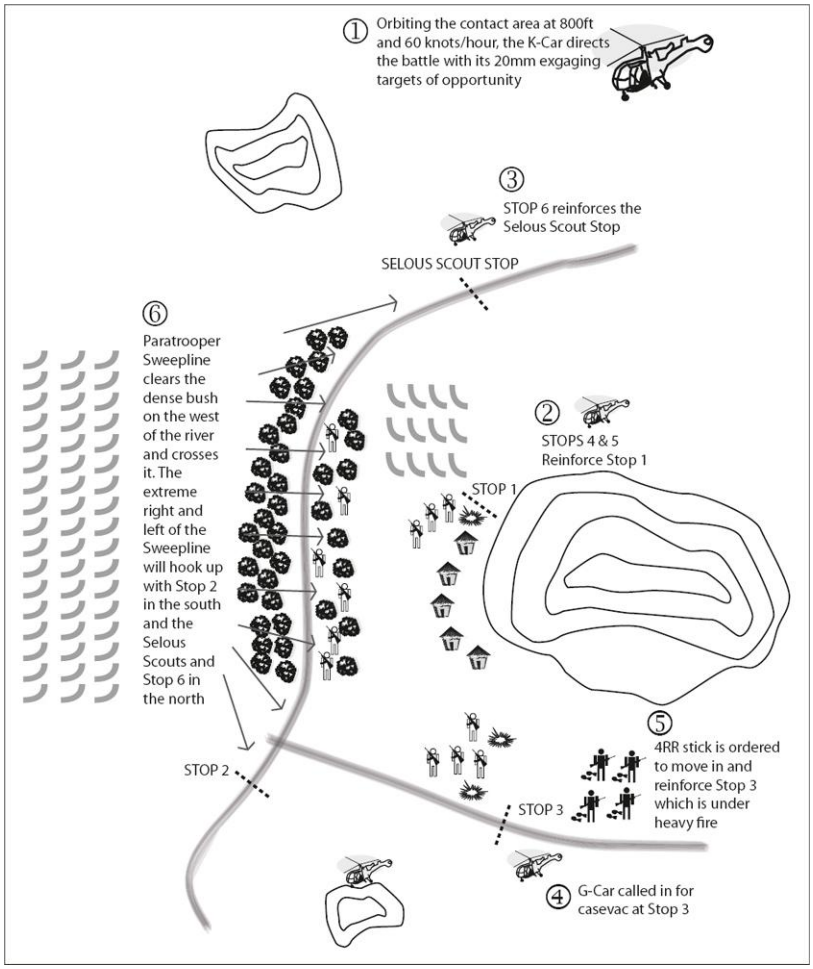
A knock-on effect of the Fire Force activation is that the BSAP Special Branch representative based at Chipinga makes haste to Nyanyadzi to work with the Ground Coverage operator should any captures be brought in and to take delivery of captured documentation and weapons.

As soon as the Selous Scout OP has the K-Car visual, he begins his talk-on, directing the K-Car onto the enemy position. Once sighted, the K-Car initiates the contact with the 20mm cannon, marking the area for the Lynx which moves into position for a bombing run, strafing the target on approach and dropping his ordnance over the target.

Simultaneously the K-Car commander has directed the G-Cars to drop Stops 1, 2 and 3 north of the kraal line at the base of the mountain's northwest face, below the riverline and farther up a smaller riverline in a deep ravine south of the mountain and the kraal line respectively.

Rolling take-off: Alouette III G-Cars get airborne from the Fore Force base.


①
Selous Scout OP talks the K-Car onto their position and then onto the target, the enemy camp at the base of the Mutambara mountain
OP
④ K-Car pulls up and Lynx ordered in for an airstrike
DZ
STOP 1
②
K-Car initiates the contact, firing 20mm rounds into the enemy base
STOP 2
STOP 3
③ G-Cars are instructed by the K-Car where to drop their Stop Groups


① Orbiting the contact area at 800ft and 60 knots/hour, the K-Car directs the battle with its 20mm exgaging targets of opportunity
③ STOP 6 reinforces the Selous Scout Stop
SELOUS SCOUT STOP
⑥ Paratrooper Sweepline clears the dense bush on the west of the river and crosses it. The extreme right and left of the Sweepline will hook up with Stop 2 in the south and the Selous Scouts and Stop 6 in the north
② STOPS 4 & 5 Reinforce Stop 1
STOP 1
⑤ 4RR stick is ordered to move in and reinforce Stop 3 which is under heavy fire
STOP 2
STOP 3
④ G-Car called in for casevac at Stop 3

A Fire Force G-Car comes into an LZ.

The first G-Car immediately departs to refuel at Nyanyadzi then returns and waits as backup for the K-Car on a nearby point of elevation. The other two hover in the contact area, engaging targets of opportunity until they too need to refuel and rearm.

As soon as the Lynx has strafed and bombed the target, it returns to Grand Reef to rearm and refuel. It returns to the contact area, holding above the K-Car in a much wider orbit awaiting further instructions. The initial K-Car 20mm fire and the Lynx airstrike have caused the gang to split up or ‘bombshell’.

Small groups of four and five scatter in different directions. Many rush into the thick bush along the river. Others move northeast between the kraal line and the mielie fields and onto the guns of Stop 1. Some move into the deeper ravine south of the mountain and TTL in a southeasterly arc toward Stop 3. Yet others divert through the kraal and then head southwest along the bushy riverline toward Stop 2.

Heated, intense firefights break out and the K-Car commander calls upon the 20 paratroopers available to him. Since the majority of the gang has sought refuge in the dense riverline between the meilie fields on either side of it, the commander directs the Dakota pilot to drop his paras west of the contact area along the north–south line of the larger mielie field in a Sweepline. These five sticks sweep east, through the mielie field toward the dense vegetation on the western bank of the river. The Dakota returns to land at Nyanyadzi to be on standby or in the event of an emergency casevac. Unable to dislodge the enemy from the riverbank, the K-Car commander decides to put in a second Lynx strike. The paras to the west pull back and the Lynx drops a second lethal load into the thick riverine bush. As a result, further bombshelling takes place up the river, necessitating the Selous Scout OP men to position themselves as a Stop Group across the river just south of the OP position.

The paras, who had drawn back, now quickly take advantage of the airstrike and move forward, clearing the bush on the river's western bank before crossing the river. Now the K-Car must refuel and rearm and it exchanges places with the G-Car on stand-by.

RLI troops deplaning from a G-Car.

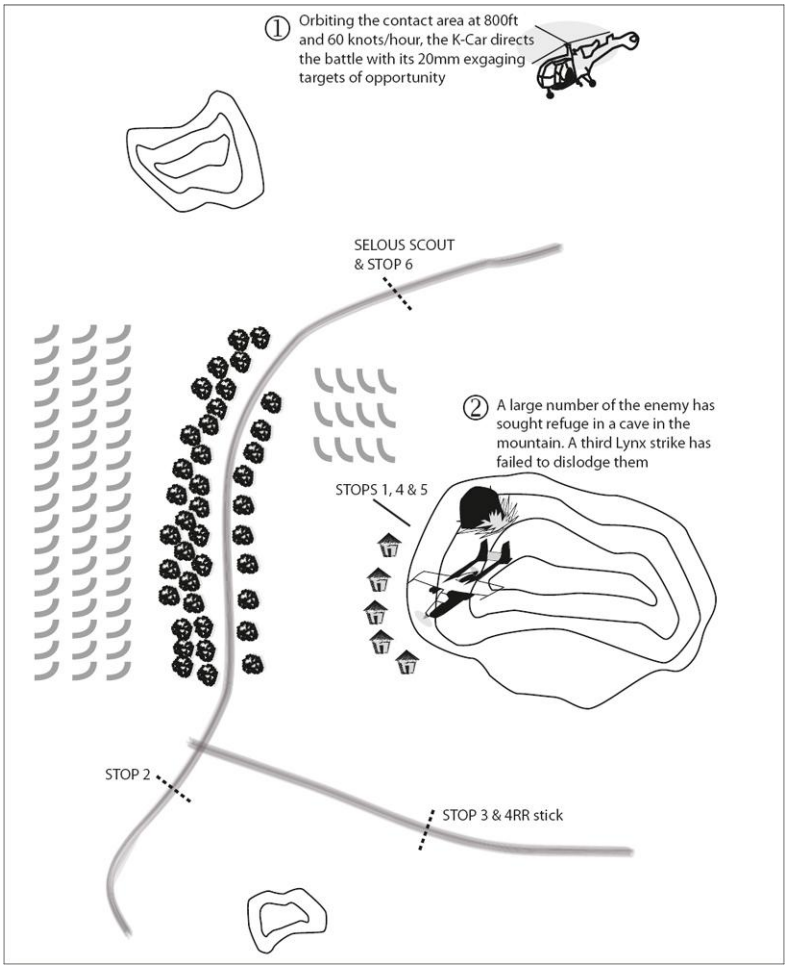
Short of troops and with a man down severely wounded in Stop 3, the K-Car commander instructs a G-Car to collect the original 4RR stick and bring them into the fray to reinforce Stop 3. The wounded RLI trooper is lifted out and taken back to Nyanyadzi. Two RR and one PATU stick are on stand-by at Chipinga. They are quickly ferried to Nyanyadzi should they be needed as reinforcements.

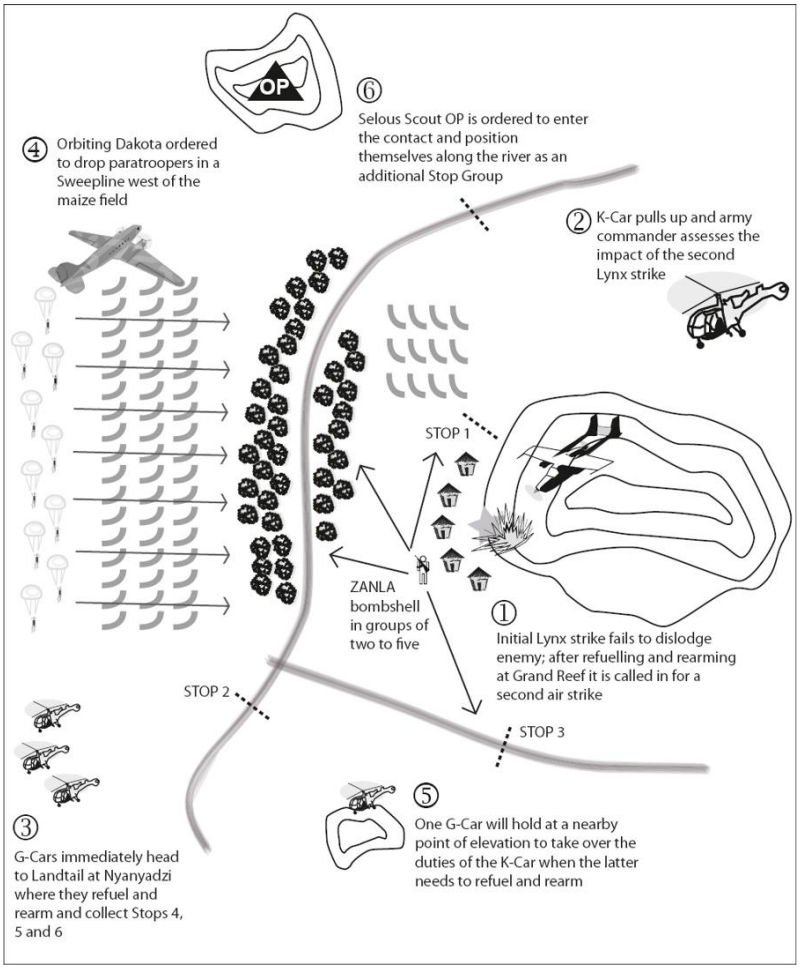
The Landtail has now arrived at Nyanyadzi.

It is a hot February day and stick medics are losing men to dehydration, something the army commander can ill afford. In the

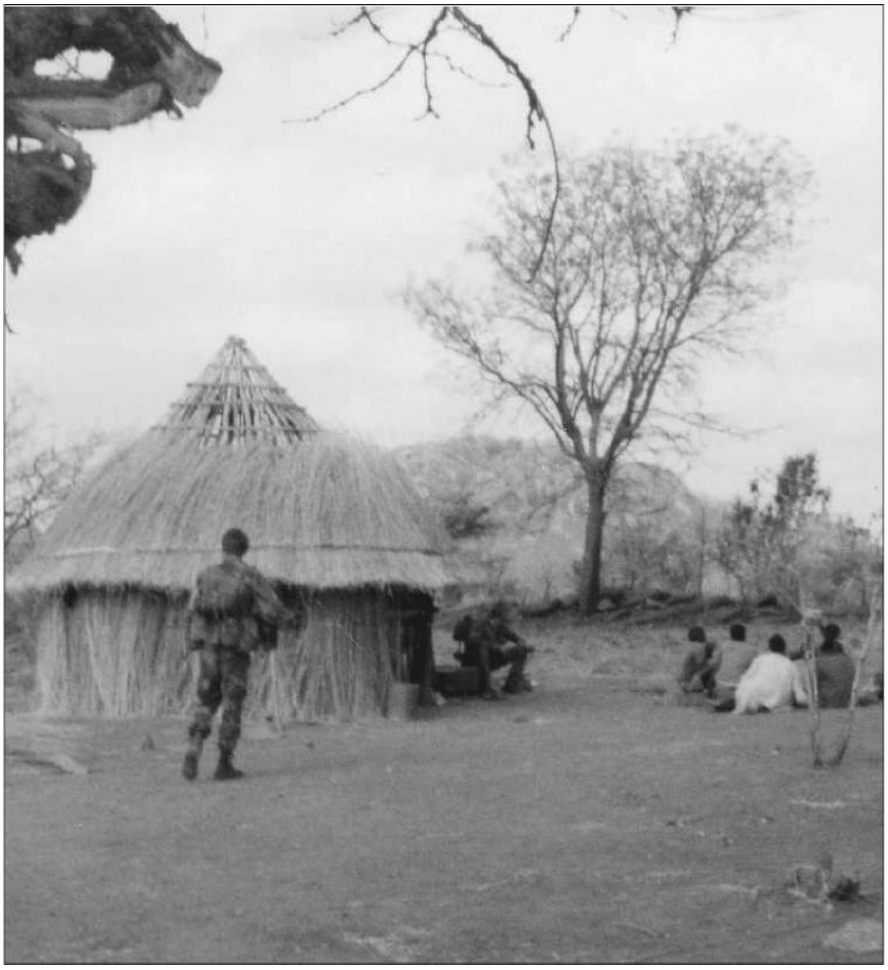
meantime, G-Cars ferry the wounded and dehydrated men out of the contact area to Nyanyadzi where they are assessed by the commando medic.

The G-Cars now bring in Stops 4, 5 and 6. Stops 4 and 5 will reinforce Stop 1 which is desperately trying to stem the tide of enemy combatants hastily making their way over the foothills of the Mutambara mountains. Stop 6 reinforces the Selous Scout Stop Group on the river. The second Lynx strike has sent groups up and down the river in an attempt to escape the bombing.


① Orbiting the contact area at 800ft and 60 knots/hour, the K-Car directs the battle with its 20mm exgaging targets of opportunity
SELOUS SCOUT & STOP 6
② A large number of the enemy has sought refuge in a cave in the mountain. A third Lynx strike has failed to dislodge them
STOPS 1, 4 & 5
STOP 2
STOP 3 & 4RR stick


OP
⑥
Selous Scout OP is ordered to enter the contact and position themselves along the river as an additional Stop Group
④ Orbiting Dakota ordered to drop paratroopers in a Sweepline west of the maize field
② K-Car pulls up and army commander assesses the impact of the second Lynx strike
STOP 1
ZANLA bombshell in groups of two to five
① Initial Lynx strike fails to dislodge enemy; after refuelling and rearming at Grand Reef it is called in for a second air strike
STOP 2
STOP 3
⑤ One G-Car will hold at a nearby point of elevation to take over the duties of the K-Car when the latter needs to refuel and rearm
③ G-Cars immediately head to Landtail at Nyanyadzi where they refuel and rearm and collect Stops 4, 5 and 6

A Fire Force G-Car negotiates a tricky LZ.



RLI troops sweep through a kraal. Photo Max Tee

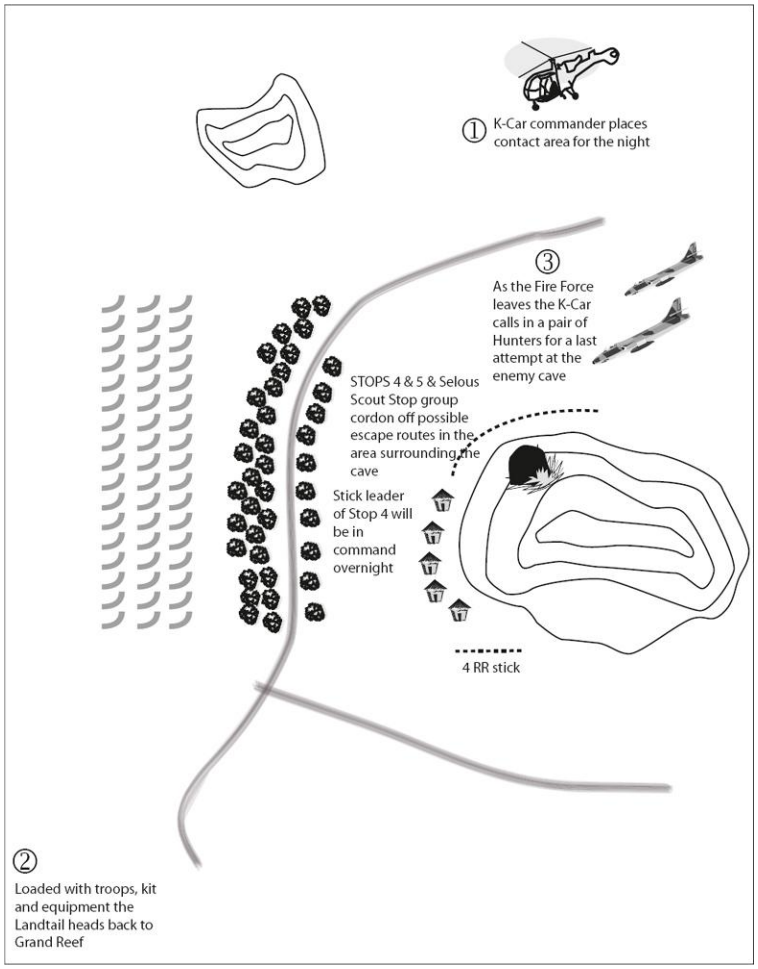
The left- and right-hand extremes of the 20 paratroopers in their extended Sweepline will, respectively, join Stop 6 and the Selous Scout Stop and Stop 2. Up until now this latter Stop has seen little action.

By now the battle has been raging for some seven hours, the men are fatigued, fuel is running low and night is falling.

A dramatic aside to the contact is that several enemy combatants have sought refuge in a cave in the Mutambara mountains. Rhodesia is made up of large granite hills pocked with caves in which the enemy

was disposed, understandably, to hide. Fierce firefights have failed to dislodge them and the Fire Force commander is running short of daylight hours. He calls for a third airstrike, this time on the cave position. The troops fall back but the strike is unsuccessful.

G-Cars repositioning from a mountaintop in the Fire Force contact area.


① K-Car commander places contact area for the night
③ As the Fire Force leaves the K-Car calls in a pair of Hunters for a last attempt at the enemy cave
STOPS 4 & 5 & Selous Scout Stop group cordon off possible escape routes in the area surrounding the cave
Stick leader of Stop 4 will be in command overnight
4 RR stick
② Loaded with troops, kit and equipment the Landtail heads back to Grand Reef

The commander must now wrap up for the day; he has exhausted and wounded troops, a KIA, a cave with upward of ten ZANLA troops and precious little time. Again he makes snap decisions based on experience and necessity. He instructs the paras to return to the DZ and collect their parachutes; these are uplifted by G-Cars and taken to Nyanyadzi where the waiting Dakota transports them back to Grand Reef. First out are the wounded, both Rhodesian and ZANLA soldiers. Thereafter the captured weapons and equipment are delivered to the awaiting Special Branch member at Nyanyadzi, then Stops 1, 2 and 3 and, finally, the four captures are also handed over to Special Branch for interviewing.

An RLI Fire Force stick leader. Note his wooden-butt FN, which was uncommon.

The dying-out of contacts on the upper reaches of the riverbank leads the commander to withdraw Stop 6 as well, leaving the Selous Scouts, Stops 4 and 5 and the RR TFs (territorials) in the contact area overnight. The TFs will move out of the ravine and hold at a position south of the base of the mountain for the night. The Stop 4 stick leader will be in command for the night. His stick, along with Stop 5 and the Scouts, will cordon off the area surrounding the cave, taking care to avoid a blue-on-blue situation with the TFs to the south.

Moving out from Nyanyadzi is the K-Car, the Lynx and the Landtail. The seriously wounded RLI rifleman has already been taken to Umtali hospital and then, due to the severity of his wounds, to Andrew Fleming hospital in Salisbury.

During the initial Stop 1 sweep through the kraal it was necessary for the Rhodesian troops to go from hut to hut, checking for and eliminating any ZANLA cadres hiding among the civilians; this resulted in the severe wounding of a woman and young boy.

An RLI stick leader (right) briefs his troops. Photo Jon Caffin

RLI troops sweep through the contact area. Photo Jon Caffin

Just prior to leaving the contact area the K-Car commander calls on two Hawker Hunters for a final strike on the cave. The Stop 4 stick leader will talk the Hunters onto the cave position and instruct his men to fall back. After the strike they will re-engage and sporadic firefights will take place throughout the night.

At first light the K-Car and the Lynx are back over the contact area, as well as two 4.5 Mercedes trucks. The trucks will not wait at Nyanyadzi but will move through the TTL on the rough roads to get to the exhausted troops as soon as possible. All remaining troops, bodies

and equipment will be loaded onto the trucks and taken back to Grand Reef, an early morning call-out demanding the presence of all available troops at the base post-haste. This includes the Selous Scout OP men as they have been compromised in the area and their presence is therefore no longer clandestine. However, the 4RR TFs will simply melt away unnoticed into the thick bush, the contact now behind them; their focus is renewed and sharp and on the lookout for any signs of new incursions of enemy activity. Their continued tracking work or indeed the observations of an RAR OP on the other side of the country will start this process all over again. And again the intelligence gained will be relayed to the closest Fire Force base commander, activating another Fire Force.

After a contact kills, wounded and captures are tallied. In this case the commander is appraised that 33 ZANLA have been killed or captured in the contact, the rest having escaped during the night. Rhodesian security force casualties amount to one killed and four wounded.

INTRODUCTION

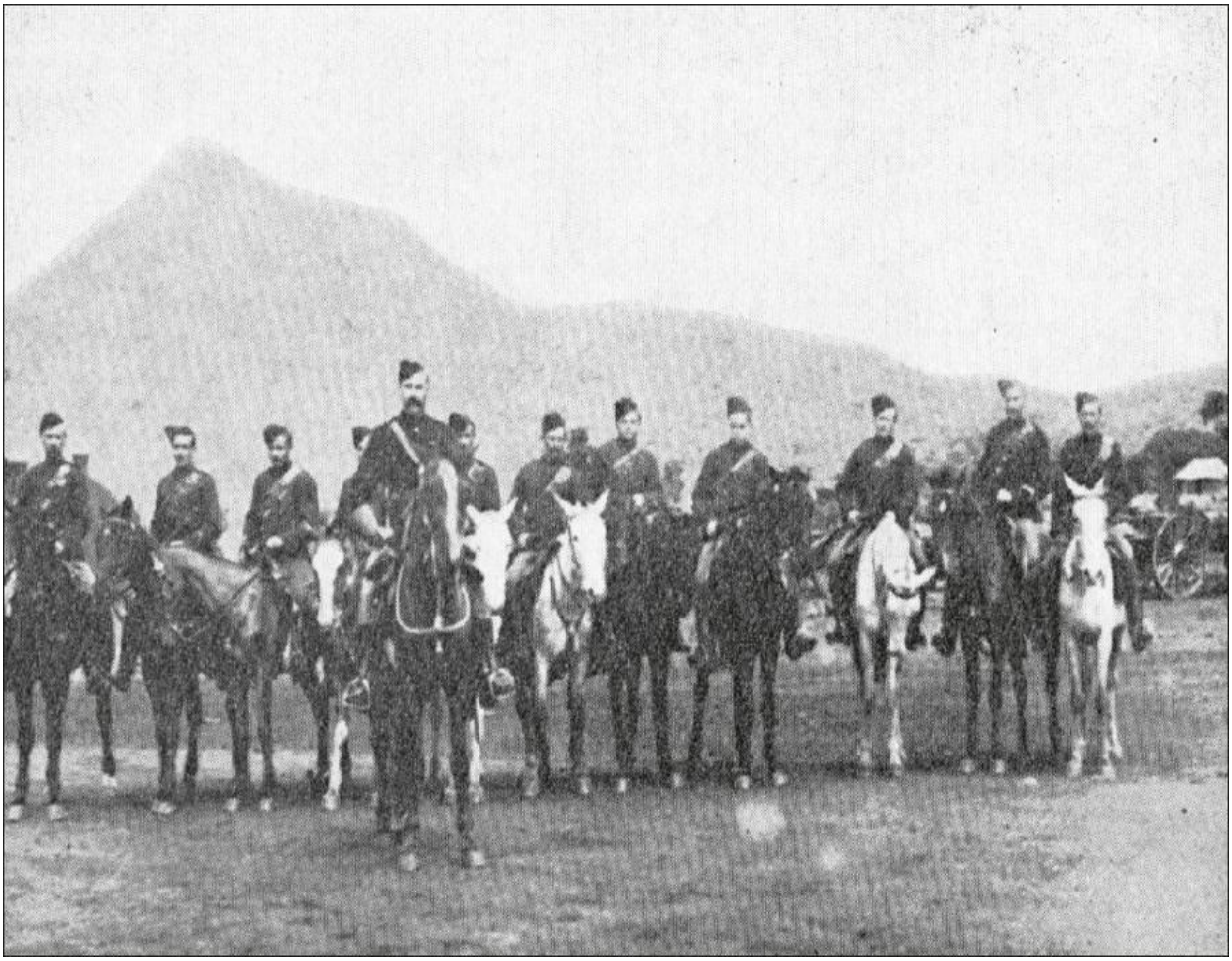
Although this contact is hypothetical, it is not beyond the realms of possibility and is indeed a composite of the plethora of Fire Force actions that took place. One may ask why, when thousands of contacts and Fire Force actions took place during the course of the war, it is necessary to make one up. I wanted an action—perfectly plausible, if fictitious—that involved all (or as many as possible) elements of the Rhodesian security forces. In order for this book to comprehensively examine every aspect of the Fire Force, no matter how seemingly small, as many components as possible needed to be included. This contact can now be broken down by unit, aircraft, tactics, equipment and methodology in order to study each part of the Fire Force contact in greater detail, allowing a holistic understanding of the Rhodesian Fire Force from 1966 to 1980.

It is also essential to note that while in 1978 a contact of this complexion was perfectly feasible, it certainly wasn't in 1966, nor even in 1974 (although operations Jacaranda and Tempest in 1971 did much in terms of the special forces cutting their teeth in preparation for the conflict to come).

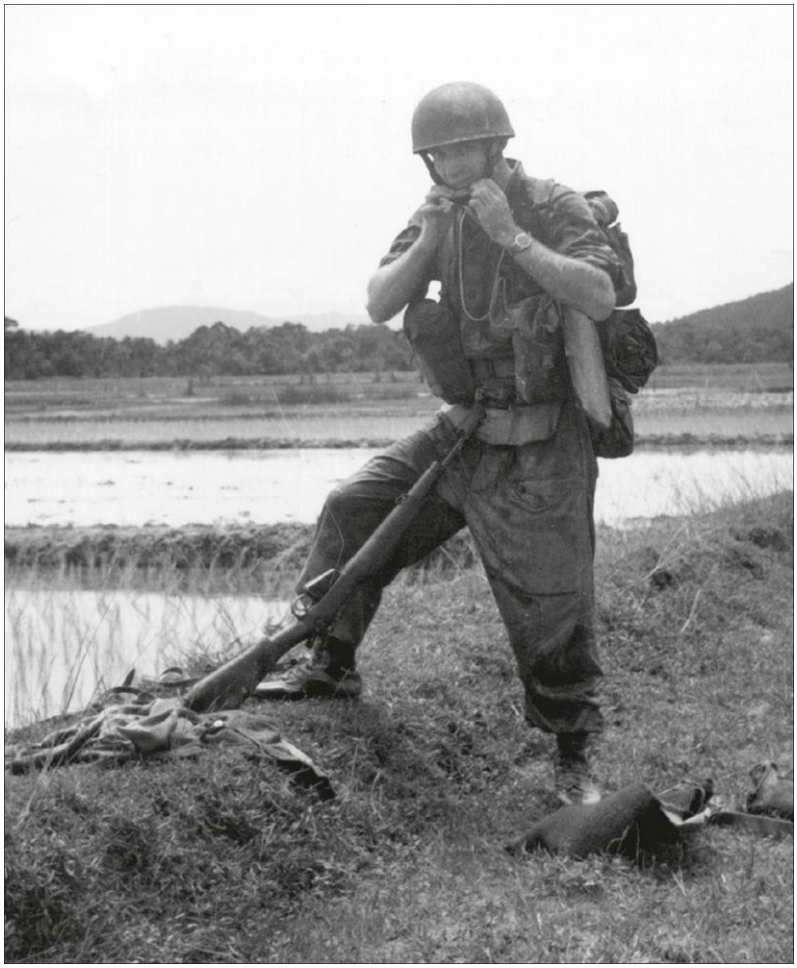
Many books have been written on the Rhodesian Bush War, everything from regimental histories to more comprehensive accounts, memoirs, individual operations and indeed a trilogy of books from a political perspective covering the twenty-one years leading to Zimbabwean independence in 1980. Indeed, the Federal army and Royal Rhodesian Air Force began to train for internal security—counter-insurgency—in the early 1960s. At that stage the Federal army consisted of four infantry battalions: 1 and 2 King's African Rifles (from Nyasaland), the

Northern Rhodesia Regiment and the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR), supported by the territorial Royal Rhodesia Regiment.

The Rhodesian African Rifles had its roots in the Rhodesia Native Regiment (RNR) formed to fight von Lettow-Vorbeck in the First World War; the RNR was disbanded at the end of hostilities and largely incorporated into the British South Africa Police (BSAP) as a paramilitary ceremonial unit. Former RNR members then formed the basis of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from which the Rhodesian African Rifles was again established in June 1940 to once again counter the German threat in East Africa. It went on to serve with distinction in Burma and after the war in the Canal Zone and Malaya—alongside Rhodesia's C Squadron SAS.



A British South Africa Company Police (BSACP) flying column, dispatched from Salisbury to Bulawayo to deal with the 1896 Matabele rebellion.



A Malayan Scout after an operational jump. The Malayan Scouts became the nucleus of C Squadron, the Rhodesian SAS.

An operational jump in Malaya.

Operation Sunrise, or the Nyasaland Emergency, was suppressed by these troops. However, this uprising highlighted the need for rapid reaction forces as these five battalions were expected to, but could not, defend and hold territory in all three colonies. The 1960 rebellion of the Congolese army and subsequent massacres in that country led the Federal government to the conclusion that not only was it necessary to increase troop numbers but that such increments be comprised of exclusively regular white troops—who would, in the main, become the Rhodesian Light Infantry, founded in February 1961

and reinforced in January 1976 with the coming of age of Support Group as the battalion's fourth fully fledged commando.

The 2nd Battalion Rhodesian African Rifles was raised as a direct consequence of the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the subsequent threat posed by a now-independent Mozambique. The RAR's 3rd Battalion was raised in September 1979 from independent companies of the Rhodesia Regiment as a consequence of the increased military pressures, especially in the frontline areas.

However, this is a book that speaks directly to a statement made by ZANLA generals at the end of the war: they could not have survived another year in the field—despite their overwhelming numerical advantage. By 1979 the Rhodesian Fire Force had become such a finely tuned killing machine, tailored to suit every detail of the Rhodesian situation, that the kill ratio at the time is estimated to have been in the region of 80 to one.

However, the concept of a Fire Force, or less flamboyantly, a quick-reaction force, is as old as war itself. Simply put, it involves moving, by whatever means available, as many troops as possible to a specified location to engage with the enemy. Over time this has, more often than not, meant by foot: soldiers have indeed marched throughout history and we need only think of General Sherman's famed march to the sea where he moved 60,000 troops 300 miles in just four weeks. Over time, longboats, camels, horses and in more recent history aircraft, ships and vehicles have all served troop-carrying purposes.

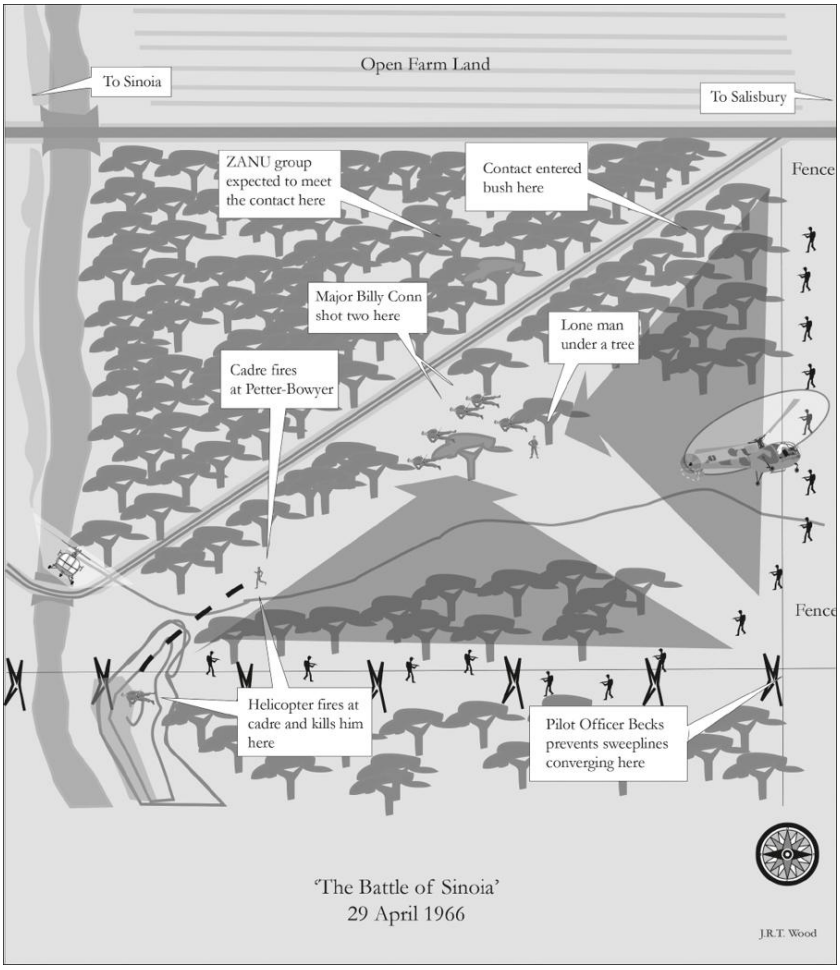
Even in Rhodesia, the Fire Force concept was not new. In 1896 a flying column was sent from Salisbury to Matabeleland to deal with that uprising. These men on horseback were a quick-reaction force. Much later the horses would be replaced by helicopters.

Yet what made the Rhodesian Fire Force of the late 1970s unique was the combination of elements to achieve speed and effectivity with minimum casualties. Another factor which has in no small way

elevated the Rhodesian Fire Force above any other singular military tactic is the astounding odds at which their successes were achieved. Although the limited resources available to the Rhodesians will be mentioned, it is not the primary focus of this narrative. Here we will investigate the components and execution of a Fire Force action by systematically breaking down our fictional contact.

A much-discussed action, yet crucial in terms of the lessons learned, is the oft-mentioned ‘Battle of Sinoia’. Major Brian Robinson (OC C Squadron SAS) described it as an action where “probably the worst guerrillas the world has ever known were killed by the worst security forces ever known”. A fair assessment. In order to appreciate the contacts of 1976 to 1979, it is necessary to sketch a picture of it here.

The Sinoia police station, unwittingly the impromptu JOC during the skirmish that became grandly known as the ‘Battle of Sinoia’.


Open Farm Land
To Sinoia
To Salisbury
ZANU group expected to meet the contact here
Contact entered bush here
Fence
Major Billy Conn shot two here
Lone man under a tree
Cadre fires at Petter-Bowyer
Fence
Helicopter fires at cadre and kills him here
Pilot Officer Becks prevents sweeplines converging here
'The Battle of Sinoia'
29 April 1966
J.R.T. Wood

Seven men, a splinter group of a 20-man ZANU insurgency force, had entered Rhodesia from Zambia on 5 April 1966, tasked to blow up the Kariba–Norton–Salisbury powerline. Their explosives training had been so poor that when they inserted the detonator into the plastic explosive attached to the pylon it did not set off the explosive and did no damage to the pylon. They did however succeed in coming to the attention of the police who managed to lay an ambush, via a rendezvous set up through an informant. The army was left out of the action as the police commissioner decided that, under the Police Act, he, and not the army, was responsible for internal security. Local

police reserve and a police support unit were roused, in all about 40 men armed with .303 rifles.

The insurgents were expecting the informant to return with supplies and information from the Salisbury ZANU commander. They would meet, on 29 April, in a triangle of relatively dense bush. Their eastern boundary was the Hunyani river, to the north the Sinoia–Salisbury main road and running southwest–northeast an old strip road.

Three helicopters were on stand-by in Sinoia and a fourth followed the informer's car. One helicopter was armed, with an MAG machine gun with infantry sights, or iron sights. It is important to note here that in Rhodesia this was the first use of helicopters in a troop-carrying capacity as would happen in the latterly developed Fire Force. The first problem, among the many that would follow, was that the insurgents were not at the agreed rendezvous, necessitating a reorganization of the predetermined cordon. However, due to incompatible radios, this information could not be shared by the helicopter commanders with the police on the ground.

When shot at by an insurgent on the ground a policeman in one of the unarmed helicopters returned fire with his Sterling sub-machine gun, wildly, through the rotors. Shell cases and in the case of the MAG, link belts, could easily have entered the slipstream causing serious damage or failure of the tail rotor. The noise from the firing and the lack of intercoms in the helicopter meant that the pilot, Peter Petter-Bowyer, could not communicate the order to his crew to cease firing. Petter-Bowyer called in the armed helicopter and then broke right to make way for Hofmeyr's incoming helicopter. Hofmeyr broke left.

After the near collision, Hoffmeyr opened fire on the lone insurgent who had fired at Petter-Bowyer, unleashing 150-odd rounds before killing him—a source of major consternation to the air force HQ. The other two helicopters had dispatched troops along a fence line running east–west and north–south of the diagonal strip road. They were to move, respectively, in northerly and westerly sweeplines.

Due to the air-to-ground communication problem, a helicopter had to land to give instructions and advise the troops that they were converging on one another and shooting at each other. In addition the fire discipline was terrible and there was no command from the air. All seven insurgents were somehow eventually killed.

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CHAPTER ONE:

TURNING POINT

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Two years later the failures and bumbles of Sinoia were, for the most part, a thing of the past. Yet the Rhodesians would again be challenged and again be forced to re-evaluate their tactics, roles and responsibilities.

1968's Operation Cauldron, because of its scale and duration, was the turning point of the war. This operation would see the last of the battle tactics employed by the officers and senior NCOs from the Malaya days as a direct reaction to a 'new' enemy.

For the first time the ZAPU insurgents crossing from Zambia were organized, numerically substantial, well-equipped, well-trained and tactically effective. They had taken time to plan their incursion through patient observation and reconnaissance.

An example of this was their point of entry. Rhodesian border patrol had unwittingly left a narrow corridor open on the Chewore river. The border was patrolled east to Kanyemba and west to Chirundu. In order to avoid the possibility of blue-on-blue incidents, these rotating patrols inadvertently stopped short of closing this gap. This was observed over time by ZAPU and then exploited.

It is also important to mention that in November of the previous year, 1967, an advance ZAPU scout group had been deployed to reconnoitre the route and report back, upon which the operation was obviously deemed sound and achievable as this eleven-man scout

group had used the proposed crossing point unhindered, advanced to Chirambakadoma hill unnoticed, where Camp 4 would be set up, and returned safely to Zambia.

Between 28 December 1967 and 5 January 1968 Camp 1 near the Makuku river was established and all supplies and men were ferried across the Zambezi from the Zambian bank. Figures vary but it is generally accepted that the incursion comprised 100 ZAPU and South African African National Congress (SAANC) cadres. After easily crossing the border they made substantial inroads into Rhodesia, setting up a series of four camps. Again, these were well-planned, well-situated and well-organized, complete with entrenched positions, bunkers and supplies. Their target was the Sipolilo reserve where they planned to establish another camp (5) to use as a base from which recruitment sorties could be launched. Camp 3 was intended as a training camp for the Sipolilo recruits.

It was by chance and pure luck that a national parks ranger happened upon the now-clearly identifiable boot-print—a Figure 8—of an insurgent on 14 March. Upon further investigation, he found that a large amount of human traffic had been, and possibly still was, in and around the area. It seems necessary to highlight how long the insurgents had been active in the area before they were detected. Their operation was obviously clandestine, but one cannot overlook the activity involved in establishing a base and the fact that the insurgents shot and killed game for food. All this went undetected for some ten weeks—another first that would need to be tactically addressed by the Rhodesians.

Park ranger Scammell reported the sighting to his HQ which in turn passed the information to the police who immediately set up an HQ in the area (Dean's Camp), as had been done during previous operations in the 1960s.

These were the humble beginnings of the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), where an officer from the local police station who had, upon receiving information of an insurgent group and having verified the

information, called in personnel from the army and air force for effective communication to deal with the particular problem.

During these early years before the locals became averse to reporting the presence of the enemy in a region, the insurgents were limited in the scope of the area they could move through. They were often forced to stick to very sparsely populated areas. One instance, during Operation Nickel in 1967, found a group of insurgents in Wankie National Park; again they were reported by national parks rangers who had picked up their spoor.

One could safely say that the first phase of the war and the tactics thus far adopted to fight it ended with the likes of operations Nickel, Griffin and Cauldron. The latter would officially change the ‘old guard’ mentality of warfare and will thus be discussed in some detail as it relates directly to the development and success of our fictitious 1978 contact.

2 Commando 1RLI stops over in Karoi, en route to Operation Cauldron in the Zambezi valley, 1968.

An RLI section on border patrol along the Zambezi River.

Operation Cauldron, officially launched on 14 March, veers from the SOP of previous operations, primarily in that it employed the greatest number of troops to counter the incursion.

Two Alouettes were immediately deployed to the HQ as well as a platoon of national servicemen and E Company 1RAR. All three RLI commandos and the RLI Support Group were on battle exercises at the time and were immediately recalled to Cranborne barracks in Salisbury and then deployed. A number of police trackers were also seconded to this operation.

So, the biggest incursion to date is met with the largest number of security forces to date. The total enemy strategy overhaul now demanded the same of the Rhodesians and they met this challenge by literally thinking on their feet as they went along and these adjustments and adaptations would be carried forward and further refined and honed throughout the 1970s.

First, it would be found that the RAR battle formation was ill-suited to the vegetation and topography of the area, rendering them slow and compelling the RLI and police trackers, who had been in their rear, to take the lead. Immediately, they were faster and could move along the tracks more quickly and make up time on the enemy's head start. In this way 30 kilometres were covered on the first day of their deployment. In fact they had been able to gain on the insurgents at such a rate that they literally ran into them. Somewhat elevated above the target river, fast thinking and keen observation kept the troops alive, preventing them from entering the dry, boot-printed riverbed into a well-laid ambush. It would transpire that this position had been selected by the insurgents as Camp 5.

A sustained battle ensued the following day. A Trojan, although unarmed, had performed two functions in this action. It had acted as a relay between the Karoi-based JOC, the tactical HQ at Dean's Camp and the men on the ground. Secondly, it had performed the role of aerial tracker and was able to support the ground-tracking operation. The insurgents, to whom the aircraft above would undoubtedly have been disconcerting, hesitated and slowed down, thus allowing the security forces on the ground to keep appraised of the enemy whereabouts and keep up with them.

For the first time, the insurgents defending their position at Camp 5 were exposed to a sustained and intense aerial attack. First, an MAG-armed Alouette provided cover for the ground troops and attempted to assist in eliminating and clearing enemy strongholds. A Percival Provost was then employed, also armed with 7.62mm machine guns, to strafe the area. When this failed to dislodge the enemy a Vampire

attacked with rockets and 20mm cannons. The aerial assault was completed with an airstrike by two Canberras. Twenty-pound fragmentation bombs were dropped on the enemy position, too.

These air assaults succeeded in breaking up the enemy position and in the morning it was found abandoned. However, although a small number of insurgents deserted, the SOP of previous years where they would have high-tailed it back to the border and the safety of Zambia, these men, under the leadership of Moffat Hadebe, split into four sections that would from their respective directions still rendezvous at Sipolilo.

The Percival Provost, the ‘Prov’.

The ‘Trog’, or Trojan.

On-the-ground intelligence-gathering through the inclusion of the police and Special Branch was key to this operation. It was through the interviewing of captures during the various and widespread running battles of the operation that it was established that the position so strongly fought for by the enemy at the riverbed was indeed the proposed site for Camp 5. It was also via a captured insurgent that the four-group split and Hadebe’s name were identified; it was further revealed that another 16 men had reinforced Hadebe.

It was thought when Camp 5 was found abandoned that Operation Cauldron would now morph into a mopping-up exercise. But with this accurate and up-to-date intelligence the Rhodesians had to about-turn and redefine their own strategy and tactics to immediately counter this new-found target- and task-driven enemy strategy.

Troops were deployed south, sweeping toward the Sipolilo reserve area. Troops were also deployed north, performing two would-be Fire Force functions; one was to sweep toward the border, reversing the route taken by the enemy and engage with cadres who had been left to defend camps 1 to 4. Troops were also deployed to resweep from Camp 1 south.

The SAS was called in to secure the border perimeter between Chirundu and Kanyemba and close up the possible corridor of escape.

Stop Groups, another Fire Force staple, were positioned at the Angwa bridge area in strategic positions running east–west of Camp 5 and south should any of Hadebe's men turn back.

Worthy of mention is that the Alouettes were engaged throughout the operation moving troops and deploying them as either Sweeplines or Stop Groups, a function of the G-Cars of the near future. Tracking from the air and dummy drops were added to their growing list of responsibilities. The Alouettes were also used offensively. And the effectiveness of the MAG was again seriously questioned.

Of significance to this operation was the deployment of 21 recruits from RLI Training Troop who were two weeks away from passing out, to bolster the Rhodesian ground strength. Two would be killed in action due to poor intelligence. A public furore ensued as the two recruits were less than eighteen years old.

Also, the inclusion of PATU sticks saw the beginnings of the all-inclusive combined operations (ComOps) of the future.

Although 51 insurgents were killed and 38 captured for the loss of four Rhodesian troops, Operation Cauldron should be viewed from the perspective of a rapid tactical shift from the top with command and control right down to Rifleman E. N. Ridge (the RLI's first KIA of the war and a member of that 21-man Training Troop unit). The integration of ground and air forces was the benchmark of Operation Cauldron.

Operation Cauldron, 1968. A Support Group 1RLI soldier armed with a shotgun is fully alert in dense elephant grass.

South African troops (likely SAP policemen) being positioned on a mountaintop in the Zambezi valley by a SAAF Alouette III during Operation Cauldron, 1968.

Incidentally, this was the first Rhodesian operation that would involve the South African Air Force (SAAF) as a result of the inclusion of SAANC members in Hadebe's group. This would have been in the form of Alouette IIs and Cessna 185s as well as 'seconded policemen'.

After Operation Cauldron the RAR would adopt their arrowhead platoon formation which was better suited to the Rhodesian bush.

The RLI, now blooded in action, would be forced to operate in smaller, highly mobile, flexible sub-units due to the regiment's numerical shortfall. These would ultimately evolve into the Fire Force five- and then four-man sticks.

Due to the extended nature of the operation and subsequent overlapping incursions, men and aircraft—Alouettes and fixed-wing aircraft—would remain deployed in areas where further mopping-up exercises were needed or when intelligence suggested a new incursion into that area. These troops and aircraft would now be based at Forward Airfields (FAFs), situated around the country to faster service operational requirements as and when the need arose.

Further to this, in order to better deal with the incursions from Zambia, two Forward Airfields were set up: FAF 1 at Wankie with FAF 2 following a short while afterward at Kariba. More FAFs would be established as the nationalist incursions into Rhodesia from Zambia and then Mozambique intensified. It was found that the two Rhodesian Air Force bases—New Sarum in Salisbury and Thornhill in Gwelo—were geographically incapable of servicing the needs of the security forces with any kind of haste, apart from supplying strike jets.

Toward the end of 1973, with the increase in insurgency in the northeastern areas, the JOC which had been established at Centenary (FAF 3) was upgraded with higher-ranking officers and moved to Bindura. The senior army representative was now a brigadier and the air force representative a wing commander, later upgraded to group captain. Centenary and Mount Darwin (FAF 4) became sub-JOCs with a lieutenant-colonel and a squadron leader in command. The main JOC at Bindura was not a tactical base like the Forward Airfields and as such was not allocated a FAF number. Richard Wood in his book Counter-Strike from the Sky: The Rhodesian All-Arms Fireforce in the War in the Bush, 1974–1980 sums up the FAF's responsibilities thus:

It was from the FAFs that the helicopters and aircraft assigned to Fire Force operated. Thornhill and New Sarum provided facilities for major maintenance and repair but the helicopter units of four to six aircraft were mainly selfsufficient because each helicopter crew comprised a pilot and a qualified technician who maintained the aircraft as well as manning its machine guns or cannons. The jet squadrons based at Thornhill and New Sarum, being in the centre of Rhodesia, were able to provide quick response anywhere when a target serious enough required their attention.

From the late 1960s the JOC would become the nerve centre of an entire operational area and would become far more inclusive, this in response to the ZANU high command's (DARE's) realization that the area of infiltration had to be 'prepared': they needed to approach the local population and they needed to subvert them and therein lies the difference between operations Nickel and Cauldron.

A further note on the JOCs is rooted in the experiences of Operation Cauldron: by the late 1970s the entire country was divided into JOCs that were geographically separated; a natural border would be a major road or river. The JOCs became the nerve centre of their operational areas which were demarcated in such a way that there could be no misunderstanding as to which areas were inclusive or exclusive to each particular JOC.

Clockwise the JOCs were as follows: Operation Tangent (west and southwest), Operation Splinter (northwest), Operation Hurricane (north), Operation Thrasher (east), Operation Repulse (southeast) and Operation Grapple in the centre of the country.

The JOC members would decide on policy and tactics to conduct operations within their areas. The successes of the JOC system led to the further establishment of sub-JOCs within the abovementioned operational areas.

Within each operational area, or JOC, there would be at least one Forward Airfield and Fire Force base; the available aircraft, troops and other resources would vary considerably and would be dependent on where enemy concentrations were highest. Ordinarily there would be four main Fire Force bases with smaller bases dotted around the country at the various Forward Airfields.

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CHAPTER TWO:

THE ALOUETTE

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Without the Alouette there could have been no Fire Force, not in Rhodesia. By definition the Rhodesian Fire Force was a rapid and complete vertical envelopment of the enemy, i.e. encircle him entirely and very quickly with highly trained, highly motivated and highly disciplined crack troops. The key word in this definition is ‘vertical’.

Because the Cold War was ‘fought’ on so many unlikely battlefields, late 20th-century strategy and tactics gave rise to a new appreciation of the purpose, design and use of aircraft and helicopters in combat. France had been a major contributor to these tactical developments, being the first to create helicopter ‘gunships’ or what the Rhodesians would call G-Cars. During the French war in Algeria (1954–62) they armed Alouette IIs and IIIs with AS10 and AS11 air-to-ground missiles. Their infantry were transported in the American-built Vertol H-21 twin-rotor helicopter. This workhorse had a crew of three to five and an additional capacity for 20 troops. The Alouette II and III on the other hand could carry four and six respectively.

A factor dictating that the Rhodesians would have to fight their aerial war with the limited-capacity Alouette helicopters was its 2,000-feet-above-sea-level terrain (in the middle- and lowveld areas but up to 5,000 feet in the highveld) and hot climate. Height and heat reduce efficiency.

Because the Alouette was not on skids but rather had landing gear, and had a main gear, the pilot could do a rolling take-off which helped with building aircraft power and gave the helicopter extra lift capability which, in really hot conditions, was much needed.

The Aerospatiale Alouette II light utility helicopter was first delivered to the French army in 1957. The design was conventional, the cockpit short, yet the dome-shaped windscreen provided excellent all-round visibility. Access for the pilot and three, or at a push four, crew/passengers was through two side-hinged automobile-style doors. The engine was powered by a 530 horsepower turboshaft engine allowing for a top speed of 185 km/h, a cruise speed of 170 km/h and a climb rate of 250 m/sec. The Alouette II had a 563-mile range and could fly at 2,286 metres above sea level.

The SIAI Marchetti SF260 Genet.

A Vampire in RRAF livery.

Alouette IIs start up.

The Royal Rhodesian Air Force (RRAF) takes delivery of the Alouette IIIs.

The Alouette III made its first appearance in 1960 and over 2,000 were eventually built. It had a larger engine and six seats. And, as the Rhodesians would find out, it was capable—or at least made capable—of sustaining significant battle damage. On 27 March 1962 the Rhodesians—at that stage still part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland—took delivery of the Alouette III helicopters and No. 7 Helicopter Squadron came into being with the strength of just two pilots, both of whom had done their conversions to helicopters in

France, plus a squadron technical officer and four technicians. At the time five additional pilots were undergoing the conversion course.

The Alouette was also purchased by the South Africans and Portuguese, meaning training and spares would be available in southern Africa.

The Britten-Norman BN-A Islander.

In the early months of 1962 most Alouette flights were demonstrative for the police and army, although in May it experienced its first paramilitary role during civil unrest in Salisbury, and acquitted itself

well, circling flashpoints and pinpointing hot spots for police patrols to follow up on. Mid-year, reconnaissance was added to the squadron's tasks when an F-24 electrically-operated camera was mounted in the rear doorway, allowing for low-level oblique photo reconnaissance. Then of course the all-important casevac, or casualty evacuation, capability needed to be tested and was done so on 3 August when a railway worker was rescued from the Chimanimani mountains. By the end of 1962 the squadron had training experience of working with police and army units, practising troop carrying and teaching police dogs and their handlers the art of emplaning and deplaning.

From 1962 to 1968 the helicopters were used as troop carriers, for casevacs, for bringing forward ammunition and supplies, positioning radios on hilltops for relay stations and other similar transport functions. They were kept well away from anywhere they could possibly be shot at—until Operation Cauldron.

Laterally, from its extreme west to extreme east Rhodesia measures roughly 837 kilometres, north to south 756 kilometres and diagonally anywhere between 640 and 855 kilometres. With a range of between 560 and 600 kilometres the Alouette was inadequate for its purpose. To counter this shortcoming, fuel was positioned all over the country, at police stations, district commissioners' offices and even in caches on top of mountains.

This all-important helicopter underwent some major modifications as a result of the conditions it was expected to fly in and the offensive and defensive roles it was tasked to perform.

One such involved the refuelling pumps for helicopters that had the quaint name of Kamina Kawena (for me, for you) that was far from quaint in its operation. Peter Petter-Bowyer best describes the intricacies of the Kamina Kawena in his autobiography, Winds of Destruction:

The pump was packed in a large metal trunk stored next to the fuel tank behind the cabin's rear wall. To refuel, the pump had to be removed from the fuel-soaked trunk. It then had to be assembled by one member of the crew while the other rolled a drum of fuel to the aircraft, heave it onto its base and remove the sealed bung. The pump stack pipe was dropped into the drum, the flexible pipe nozzle inserted into the helicopter fuel tank and hand pumping commenced. Even with technician and pilot taking turns in pumping, it was a tiring business. Once the drum was empty, the process was reversed; by which time one's hands and overalls were stained and stinking of fuel.

We only had eight helicopters and could ill-afford a slow turn-around or the physical stresses that repeated refuelling induced during operations. Too often a pilot needed to be briefed or debriefed between flights, meaning that his technician had to do the entire refuelling job on his own. There had to be a simple way of overcoming this.

The C-47 Douglas ‘Dakota’.

A pair of Canberras prepares for take-off.

So Petter-Bowyer set about designing a system for refuelling.

The unit we produced was really quite simple. A pressure line from the P2 pressure plug (the 6 psi static pressure point) conveyed pressure air into a head on the stack pipe. With the stack pipe inserted into a drum the head sealed the drum's bunghole when a handle bar on its side was rotated through 90 degrees. The pressure air then forced fuel up the stack pipe and into the helicopter fuel tank via a standard flexible hose. The effort required was minimal.

Because of the extensive role this helicopter played in the Rhodesian Fire Force this segment is entirely dedicated to its roles, responsibilities, development and armament. In doing so it also obviates to need to go into the minutiae when breaking down the elements of a successful Fire Force as the reader will go into the contact pre-armed with this information.

The Alouettes were grouped at Centenary and Mount Darwin with elements of two regular battalions, 1RAR and 1RLI respectively, together with members of the BSAP. At first the helicopters ferried whatever troops were on hand but it soon became obvious that men and machines should be stationed closer to possible or probable areas of incident to provide a quick reaction. These reaction groups or bases became known as Fire Force bases. The troop-carrying, armed Alouette IIIs became known as G-Cars, the gunships. After the skirmish at Sinoia all helicopters were fitted with the reflector sight. However they were still armed with the infantry MAG 7.62mm machine guns, firing 600 rounds per minute. It was soon discovered that, despite the reflector sight, the MAG was inadequate. Too much ammunition was spent in the attempt to hit a moving target from a moving helicopter. In 1976 the MAG was replaced by twin .303 Browning Mk II machine guns, the aircraft gun from the old Lancaster bombers of the Second World War. It could fire 1,500 rounds per minute per gun. The Brownings were affixed to two pintle-mounted tanks, each of which carried 300 rounds. Spare ammunition was usually carried in the front of the G-Car.

Maintenance on the Alouette III was ongoing and critical.

As with the MAG though, the gunner-technician still had to hit the target with a bullet to knock him down but at least the increased rate of fire gave him a greater opportunity to achieve that. However, due to the rate of fire, the gunner-technician would very often run out of ammunition and resort to firing his FN from the G-Car, and after 1976 there were many contacts where the G-Car did in fact run out of ammunition and it became common practice for the gunners to resort to their FNs.

As a troop carrier, or G-Car, the Alouettes initially carried sections of five men, what was then called a brick. As the war intensified, the weight of the armour plate fitted around the pilot dictated that the brick be reduced to four men—and the brick became a stick. In these earlier days all seats faced forward and the engineer, or gunner-technician, would sit in the ‘passenger’ seat closest to the door, which was impractical for various reasons. One of the first changes to the helicopter was that the doors were removed and the guns were mounted at the back (the back left, diagonally the other side of the pilot).

The Alouette was a maintenance-heavy aircraft and needed constant lubrication. There were 20 grease nipples on the main rotor head alone and every five hours they needed to be lubricated. The tail rotor drive shaft had oil light bearings that had to be lubricated individually with a hand-held oil gun. Neglecting any one of these could result in a crash.

Maintenance on the Alouette was constant and critical. Because of the restricted lift capability it was important to check the rotor blades. Often from the seventh rivet on the main rotor blades they would crack from the trailing edge to the leading edge.

The Alouette was also very susceptible to dust ingestion which would degrade the engine power. The large, rectangular sand filter, or what was commonly referred to as ‘elephant ears’, would be removed on landing, without exception, and cleaned, generally by banging it against the wheel.

The K-Car, Command Car, called ‘k’ because it has a hard sound as opposed to the soft ‘c’, was the CEO of the Rhodesian Fire Force. It was the eyes and ears of the battle, hosting the best of the RLI, RAR and air force command staff and was armed with what would give it the nickname, ‘Killer Car’.

Experiments had been conducted with the .50 calibre Browning machine gun, but again, although it could destroy a building and knock

down an aircraft, it proved equally incapable of hitting a running man as the MAG.

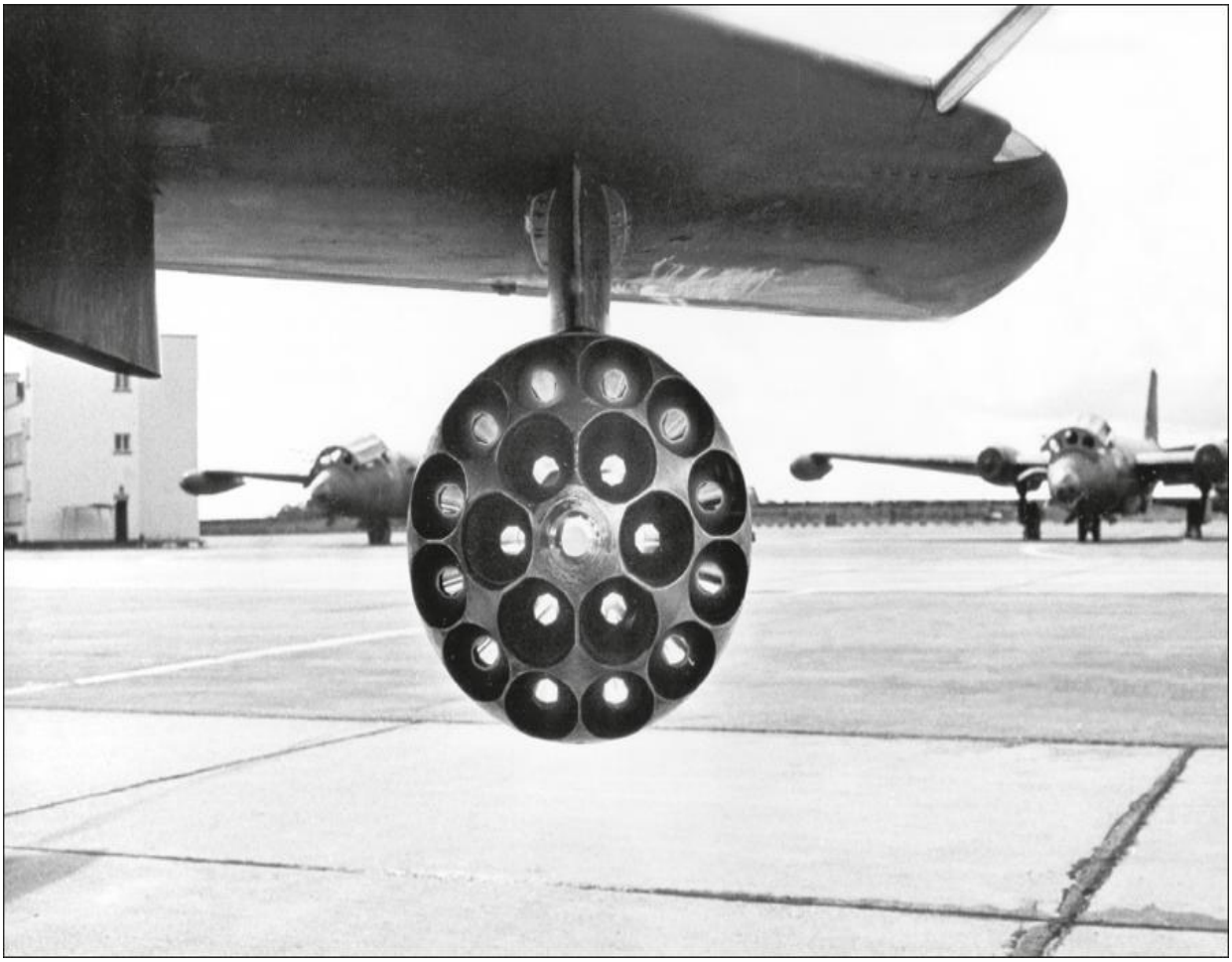
The most effective weapon and indeed the single-most successful weapon of the war was the Matra MG151 20mm cannon which fired a high-explosive incendiary round and had a cyclic rate of 350 rounds. Now the gunners would aim next to their target or at nearby rocks as the explosive effect of the shell would bring him down, so effective was the spread of the shrapnel. It had a low-velocity shell and thus a short recoil, whereas a high-velocity shell would knock the helicopter off course due to the increased recoil. Although the rounds were expensive, necessitating a burst of only three to four rounds at a time, it proved the ideal gun for this war.

For the men on the ground the noise of the 20mm was deafening and being anywhere near the K-Car gunner's ground target would send troops flat against the ground, literally hugging the earth. All ground troops at one time or another found themselves in this position and without fail the experience has been described as terrifying. The 20mm was most effective in rocky areas but wooded or bushy areas could also be devastating to anyone on the ground. The shrapnel caused by a 20m shell hitting a rock was pebble-sized shards with razor-sharp edges flying in all directions, much as a grenade impact would have. On hard ground it could kill someone up to 20 metres away. As with a grenade, injury would depend on the point of impact, the shrapnel capable of severing a limb, disembowelling or killing with a strike to the head. On soft ground the 20mm was rendered almost useless as it would have to hit the man directly. When firing in heavy rain or through thick trees the round could airburst or tree-burst, both with lethal effect. The K-Car gunner-technician would load the 20mm belt with one round ball and three rounds incendiary.

The K-Car gunners first sat up front but later small, armoured seats were built for them. However, most preferred to sit at the back, flat on the floor with their legs extended straight out and the 20mm dead in front of them.

The deadly Matra MG151 20mm gun on the K-Car.

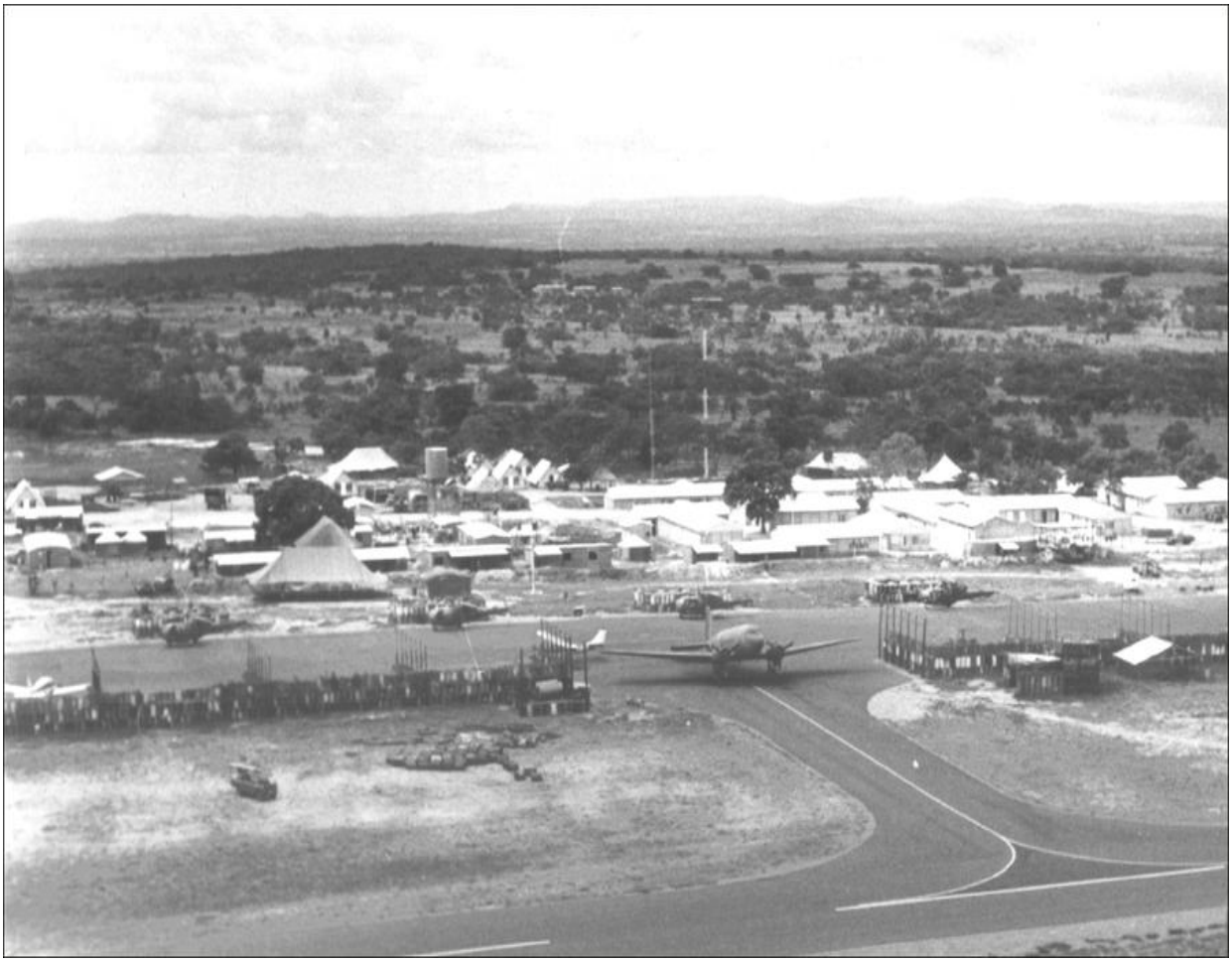
Twin .303 Brownings door-mounted on a G-Car.



Matra 168mm rocket pod under-wing a Hawker Hunter.

A K-Car winds up as dawn starts to break. Photo Neill Jackson

An Alouette III in a very tight LZ.



A well-developed FAF / Fire Force base. A Dakota taxies out of the revetments, with the Alouette's lined up behind.

There were some fundamental differences between the G-Car and the K-Car. As has been alluded to, in the G-Car the front passenger door was taken off but in the K-Car it remained in place and could be closed. The army commander would sit up front facing rearward. His seat would be angled slightly to his right, toward the door. He therefore had a 90-degree rear- and side-facing view of the contact scene below. When this change was first made the commanders found it quite disorientating but soon became adept at controlling the air and ground battle from this vantage point.

By 1978 it became a top priority for the Rhodesians to acquire more helicopters. The success of the Bush War depended heavily on their availability and although the Alouette was working tirelessly, it could still only carry four troops, less if additional fuel was on board. The Agusta-Bell AB 205A was chosen with one Keith Thurman negotiating the deal. After a certain amount of wrangling, as the Bell was under licence to the US Huey Company, it was discovered that the Israeli Air Force had surplus Bells which could be made serviceable for the Rhodesians.

Again the sanctions-busting machine leapt into action and after much to-ing and fro-ing, eleven Agusta-Bell 205 'Huey' helicopters arrived in Durban, South Africa in October that year. They were collected from the Pietersburg Air Force Base in South Africa in stages but they arrived in Salisbury in poor condition. The Middle East desert conditions and sand storms they had operated in had damaged the engines.

The Agusta-Bells, or Cheetahs as they were locally known in Rhodesia, were stripped down and rebuilt bolt by bolt. They were used operationally in May the following year, 1979, for the first time by the newly established No. 8 Squadron.

Although the Agusta-Bells could carry three sticks, 12 men, they were not nearly as agile as the Alouettes. Difficulties were experienced in getting a Bell into a tight LZ which was inevitably where you required your troops. Because of the aircraft's weight and speed, it required a very long lead in to the LZ, plus the LZ would have to be very precisely described to the pilot, at which time it would overfly the LZ, turn and get into position to run up to the LZ to put its troops down. This considerably slowed the quick-reaction time and increased the noise over the target area, thus alerting the enemy to the Fire Force and allowing him to make good his escape. The Bells also had a higher fuel consumption, requiring more thorough logistical planning.

RAR troops emplaning to Agusta-Bell 205 ‘Hueys’ (Cheetahs in RhAF parlance) at a bush strip deep in the operational area.

The advantage of the Bells lay in their lift capability, thus they were invaluable when bringing in the second wave of sticks and in carrying fuel and ammunition. Captured heavy equipment and weaponry could also be easily airlifted out. Although the Bell 205s were at times used for Fire Force operations and could carry three sticks, they were almost exclusively earmarked for the growing number of cross-border, or external, operations.

Onto the fixed-wind air force component, South African support was crucial to the war effort especially toward the end when the Vampires and Canberras were beyond repair. Richard Wood succinctly sums up the air capability of the Rhodesians in 1976:

Also in 1976, six Britten-Norman BN-A Islanders were obtained for No. 3 Squadron to join additional Dakotas [C-47s or DC-3s], a Cessna 421A and a Beech 95 C-55 Baron. In 1977, 31 SIAI Marchetti SF260 Genets were bought to replace the Provost trainers of No. 6 Squadron and to provide more light attack aircraft after being fitted with under-wing gun pods.

In the mid-1970s, when the Vampire T11s were beyond repair, South Africa set up a flying school in Durban where young Rhodesians flew Impala jet trainers. The South African Air Force also allowed the Rhodesians to man, fly and maintain a Mirage III squadron to equip them to fly advanced aircraft … South African Canberra B12s would reinforce the Rhodesian Canberra force.

… the South Africans also built two advanced airfields, capable of handling jet aircraft, at Wankie, just south of Victoria Falls and at Fylde, near Hartley, west of Salisbury. More important was the contribution of South African helicopters and crews … When major cross-border operations were being mounted, such was the co-operation with the South African Air Force that the Rhodesians could field 50 helicopters.

In late 1979, too late really, two South African-manned Fire Force bases were established at Rutenga and West Nicholson: FAFs 9 and 10 respectively. These were equipped with four South African

Aerospatiale Pumas transporting South Africa paratroopers with Rhodesian pilots and army personnel assisting.

Following on from Wood's comments, it is interesting to take a quick look at the establishment of a jet-powered air force. At the dissolution of Federation, considering the size of Southern Rhodesia and the overt threats to its national security at the time, the transfer of the entire Federal air force to the country gave it a relatively formidable air capability requiring no less than seven squadrons to accommodate, operate and maintain it. At the time there was much criticism over the strength of this air force by fellow African countries. Ghana was the most outspoken, stating: "The Rhodesian air force is more powerful than that of even South Africa. It is stronger than the combined metropolitan and colonial air force of Portugal." Mr Quaison-Sackey went on to speculate that the transfer of such a force to a white-dominated country could only lead to conflict.

A sub-JOC in the operational area.

A Bell 205 in a cleared LZ takes delivery of ZANLA captures.

A Hawker Hunter flies low over a temporary Fire Force base, this one in Chipinga. Photo Neill Jackson

The Hawker Hunter Mk IX ground-attack fighters arrived in Rhodesia from the United Kingdom on 20 December 1962 and would ultimately prove their worth, seeing out the war in their frontline, ground-attack fighter capacity. They could carry rockets, bombs weighing up to 1,000 pounds and fire air-to-ground missiles. The 12 Hunter FGA-9s joined No. 1 Squadron.

Also in the Rhodesian Air Force arsenal and on constant standby for heavy bombing runs were the 12 Vampire T11s and FB9s—not

forgetting the additional 12 in stowage—and 18 Canberra B2s. Four Canadair C-4s were also taken delivery of in 1959 and would serve a transport function.

The two main air force bases in Rhodesia were New Sarum in Salisbury and Thornhill in Gwelo. Thornhill was home to Hawker Hunters (No. 1 Squadron) and Vampires (No. 2 Squadron), the air force's two ground-attack strike jets. A training squadron (No. 6 Squadron) with Provosts and Genets as well as No. 4 Squadron, also flying Provosts and later the Lynx es were also accommodated at Thornhill. New Sarum was the base for No. 3 and No. 7 squadrons, the Dakota and Alouette III squadrons respectively. Later No. 8 Squadron would be formed, initially with Alouettes but later with the Bell 205s.

The 12 de Havilland Vampire T11s and FB9s would make up No. 2 Squadron. The Vamps, as they were fondly referred to, fulfilled much the same role in the Rhodesian war as the Hawker Hunters. The Vampires were armed with two 20mm Hispano cannons and could carry rockets and bombs and would, almost 20 years on, still be flying combat missions.

The English Electric Canberras joined Nos. 5 and 6 Squadrons. This strike-minded, jet-powered, medium bomber made up Britain's critical fighter/reconnaissance squadrons during the 1950s and 1960s. It was the aircraft that replaced the successful de Havilland Mosquito of the Second World War. Physical work on the Canberra started in 1946 and the first flight is recorded in May 1949. Very few alterations were deemed necessary to finalize the design. Only two changes were effected: the engines were upgraded for more power and additional fuel tanks were added under the wingtips for increased range. While in its design phase, an order was placed for the aircraft by the Australians and it was named after the Australian capital city as a result. The Canberra proved a fast mount, capable of flying at 580 mph; as a result no defensive armament was required in the form of

rear-facing turrets and cannons, though this would change though when her function flipped from defence to offence in Rhodesia.

Rhodesian Air Force Canberras were armed with 300 Alpha anti-personnel fragmentation bombs or six 1,000-pound HE bombs. A collimateur bombsight was used for the Alpha bombs.

The Rhodesian Air Force Canberras had two weak points; one was the main spar—in fixed-wing aircraft this is the main structural component of the wing that runs at right angles to the fuselage. In this case the main spar was often subject to corrosion and a few Canberras were in fact lost due to suspected main spar failures. The other weakness, and more dangerous of the two, was that the jet pipe was susceptible to ground-to-air, shoulder-launched Strela missiles. Although the engine was set well back in the jet pipe, a missile striking the front of the pipe could still blast away the entire pipe.

As important as its bombs was its photography equipment. The Canberra was used extensively for reconnaissance. A standard Canberra B2 would be equipped with F24 or F49 reconnaissance cameras mounted in the rear fuselage and an F95 tactical reconnaissance camera, rear-facing, mounted in the bomb bay.

By 1968 most of the country had been aerially photographed for the Surveyor General to produce maps, so critical in the escalating conflict. This was no small feat; aerial photographic work is extremely sensitive to the smallest changes in height, speed, altitude and bearing. No. 5 Squadron was detailed for this task. Canberras were used with fixed survey cameras operated remotely from the bomb-aimer’s position. Time intervals were set so that the area of ground covered by each photograph overlapped by 30 per cent, thereby ensuring that all ground details were recorded by at least two photographs.

Survey cameras had interchangeable lenses. A six-inch wide-angle lens (as well as an 80mm RC-10 wide angle) could photograph from 50,000 feet and capture 235 square kilometres of territory. The 36-

inch telephoto lens obtained reconnaissance information. Hand-held cameras were also used in Provosts and Alouettes to record oblique target photos.

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CHAPTER THREE:

SPARROWS

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The four-man tracking stick from the 4th (Manicaland) Battalion Rhodesia Regiment out on the eastern extremity of the Rhodesian border were territorials but they were consummate professionals. They loved the land and they could live off it; they were older men, seasoned in the ways of this war and the bush in which it took place. In all likelihood they were farmers and hunters from the area, giving them an even greater advantage in that they were patrolling their own 'backyard'.

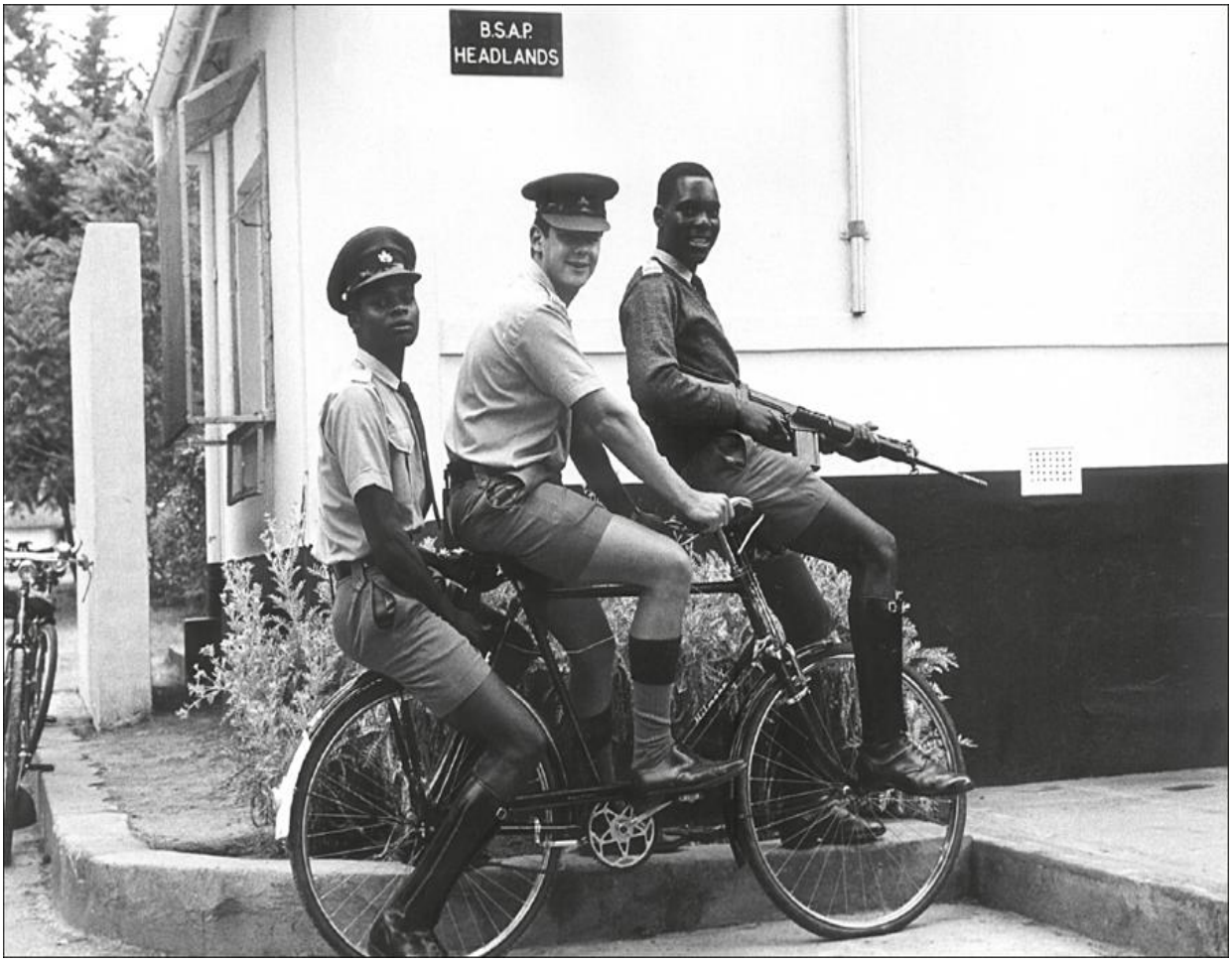
The art of tracking and reconnaissance and the units involved in this science had become significant in Rhodesia at the time of the February 1978 contact.

The TFs knew their 'beats', they knew what should and shouldn't be there. PATU members (normally BSAP reservists) had also been selected and trained in tracking, the men of the RAR knew the land on which they fought and died as children know each secret hiding place in a garden. These VATs (Volunteers for Advanced Training) were supreme experts and in time the Selous Scouts would too master this vital intelligence-gathering function.

Tracking and the gathering of counter-terrorist information had its roots with two crucial protagonists in the intelligence field: Bill Bailey and Peter Petter-Bowyer. Not only did the latter have a massive influence in the surveying of the country's topography and thus the

availability of suitable maps but he ‘saw’ things from the air that became critical in reconnaissance and tracking.

A 4th (Manicaland) Battalion Rhodesia Regiment tracking stick —’Sparrows’—in the Honde valley on the eastern border, 1976.



Headlands police station in the rural areas of Operation Thrasher, with three BSAP details clowning for the camera. Often such lonely outposts were only manned by a patrol officer, a sergeant and a couple of constables.

Rhodesia Regiment territorials and Rhodesian African Rifles troops de-bus in preparation for a joint operation. Photo John Wynne Hopkins

Peter Petter-Bowyer, sublime architect of aerial tracking and a host of aircraft weapons systems.

He was the architect of aerial reconnaissance. His reasoning and rationale were so simplistic as to be genius. When he first took to the air it was with the thought that we are creatures of habit and thus our movements through the bush must be regular and routine: paths oft used should provide a clear picture from the air, and they did.

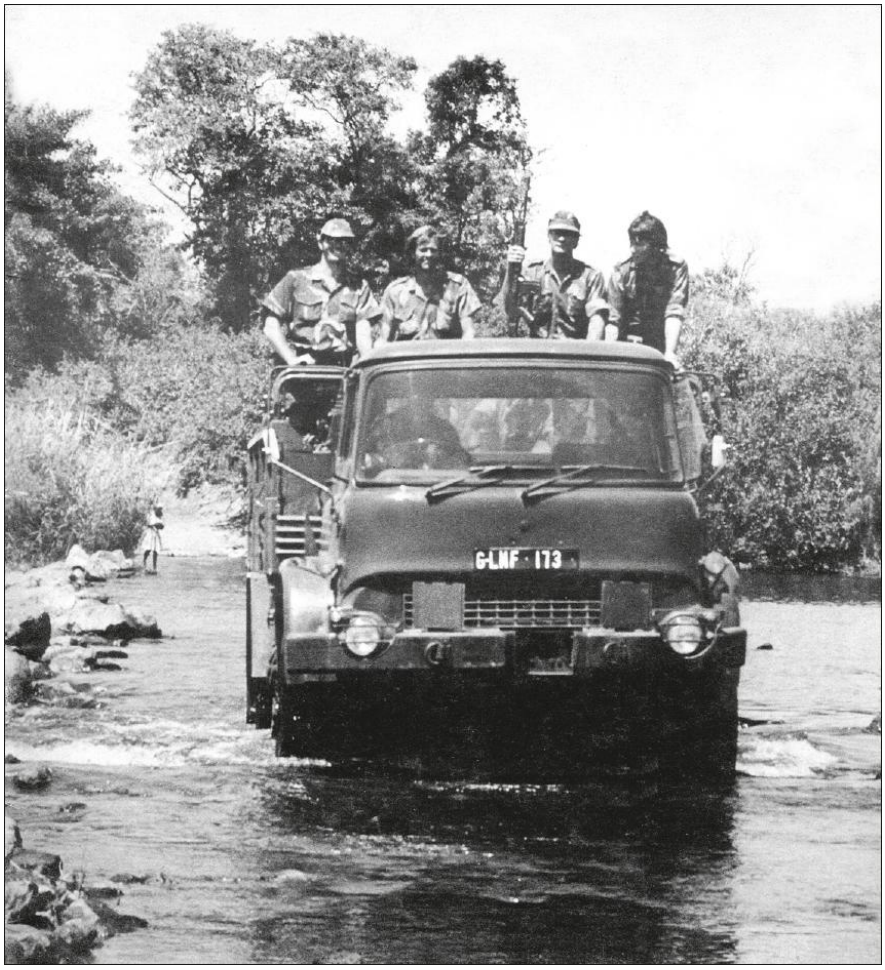
Hours and hours of close study from 1,500 feet proved him right. Slowly he began to discern between game trails and domestic animal trails, and paths used regularly by women to bathe or launder. He

became versed in ablution paths—short paths from huts and kraals that ended suddenly. He could tell which were those used by men, which were the women's toilet paths and even the haphazard paths made by children for the same purpose.

He then put his new-found knowledge to the ultimate test. He made a study of a single village. Hour upon hour overflying it, establishing who lived there, in which huts, how many men, women and children, when and where the women bathed, where they cooked, everything he could possibly think of studying and recording, he did. Then he landed, walked to the village and verified his information with the village headman. His observations had been keen and correct.

However, now the opposite had to be studied—irregular patterns of human behaviour when an area was only temporarily inhabited. What visible picture does erratic behaviour paint? The behaviour of those who don't 'belong' in the area and are just passing through, those for whom the lifestyle pattern of the area so carefully studied is not the norm, i.e. the insurgents.

A PATU stick checks the map in the Kandeya TTL, north of Mount Darwin, Operation Hurricane.



A PATU lorry fords a river in the Lowveld's Operation Repulse.

Peter Petter-Bowyer: "Now I had a fair idea of the basics but needed to know more about patterns that developed when humans occupied ground temporarily. Army bush camps, farm workers felling trees for tobacco barn boilers and grass cutters reaping thatching grass were some of the activities that helped build a picture of fresh human disturbances in open grassed and bush areas."

A major obstacle would be telling the difference between game trails and trails made by humans. Wild pigs, for example, have the same erratic patterns as children. Fresh elephant-feeding paths and human

transit lines through grassed areas was another point of confusion. But slowly the subtle differences made themselves known to him. Wild pigs have sharp kinks in their path lines, human paths leave a continuous chevron pattern pointing in the direction of movement, whereas elephants make a series of halfmoon patches with undisturbed grass in between them.

In open grassland, since humans hardly lift their feet when they walk, they draw grass blades forward, bruising and flattening the stems under foot. One person leaves a faint but detectable trail and more following in single file leave a magnification of that trail.

Over mountains or areas of elevation humans will always use the most direct path—straight up, straight down—whereas animals move with the contours of the topography. However, humans will use a game trail already in existence if the direction it takes is similar to that in which they are going, as was the case in Operation Cauldron, making their presence undetectable.

Other anomalies crept in and were worked out but in some cases differences were only discernible from the air.

The time came for the same comprehensive photographing for mapping purposes and reconnaissance surveillance outside the borders of the country, in order that units on border patrol were versed in the art of ground tracking and could thus discern the spoor of an incoming gang, as with the 4RR stick.

Now, however, all aircraft would stick to a very strict 2,000 feet. The same methods were employed: hours of close study in order to compare rural habitation patterns and animal paths and to be able to plot these paths on maps, as well as villages (inhabited and abandoned), fields and otherwise interesting topographical features. All this was documented and taught, to other pilots and ground teams.

Bill Bailey was as dedicated and progressive at Petter-Bowyer, if also a little ‘left field’ in his thinking when it came to the art of warfare. In

order to understand the eventual formation and success of PATU, it is necessary for a moment to step back and examine the BSAP and its splinter units.

Rhodesian intelligence goes back a long way, from the days where rural, isolated BSAP police stations were manned by a sergeant and a couple of constables who would literally walk their ‘beat’. They knew every person, every village and every kraal, every game path, foot path, birth and death and could probably pair a stray cow with its owner. So when the first small groups of enemy insurgents started to cross into Rhodesia from Zambia this was, for the ordinary villager, newsworthy and warranted a trip to the local police station to inform the member in charge of this presence in their area.

A G-Car pilot shows off while his gunner-technician tightens a wheel nut.

BSAP Dog Unit trackers on a follow-up.

Three PATU co-founders: Bill Bailey (ex-LRDG and -SAS) is flanked by Reg Seekings (BSAP and ex-SAS) and Chief Superintendent Derek Humberstone (BSAP).

A Special Branch detail en route to a Fire Force contact in an Alouette III. Photo Nick Russell

BSAP police reservists outside Salisbury, 1979. The mine-protected vehicles flanking the Land Rover appear to be ‘Hyenas’.

BSAP Support Unit.

The BSAP was responsible for maintaining law and order under the Police Act and was made up of some 7,000 policemen and a formidable volunteer reserve of up to 30,000, this latter figure made up of men and women, black and white. (In the late 1960s the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU) would be formed from both regular and volunteer members.)

The history of the police force commenced in 1889 with a recruiting campaign for the British South Africa Company Police to accompany

the Pioneer Column. The force numbered five hundred men under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Pennefather. In 1891 the Mashonaland Mounted Police came into being, followed by the Matabeleland Mounted Police, and a municipal force known as the Southern Rhodesia Constabulary. In the 1896 the word ‘company’ was dropped from the name and in 1903 the force was reorganized and the first commissioner, Colonel Bodle CMG, was appointed. In 1909 all the above forces, together with the Bechuanaland Border Force, were amalgamated into one unified force—the British South Africa Police. Contingents of the BSAP served in the Anglo-Boer War and in the First World War. Until 1953 there was no standing army with the police being the first line of defence, therefore being the senior uniformed force and holding the ‘Right of Line’ in any parade.*

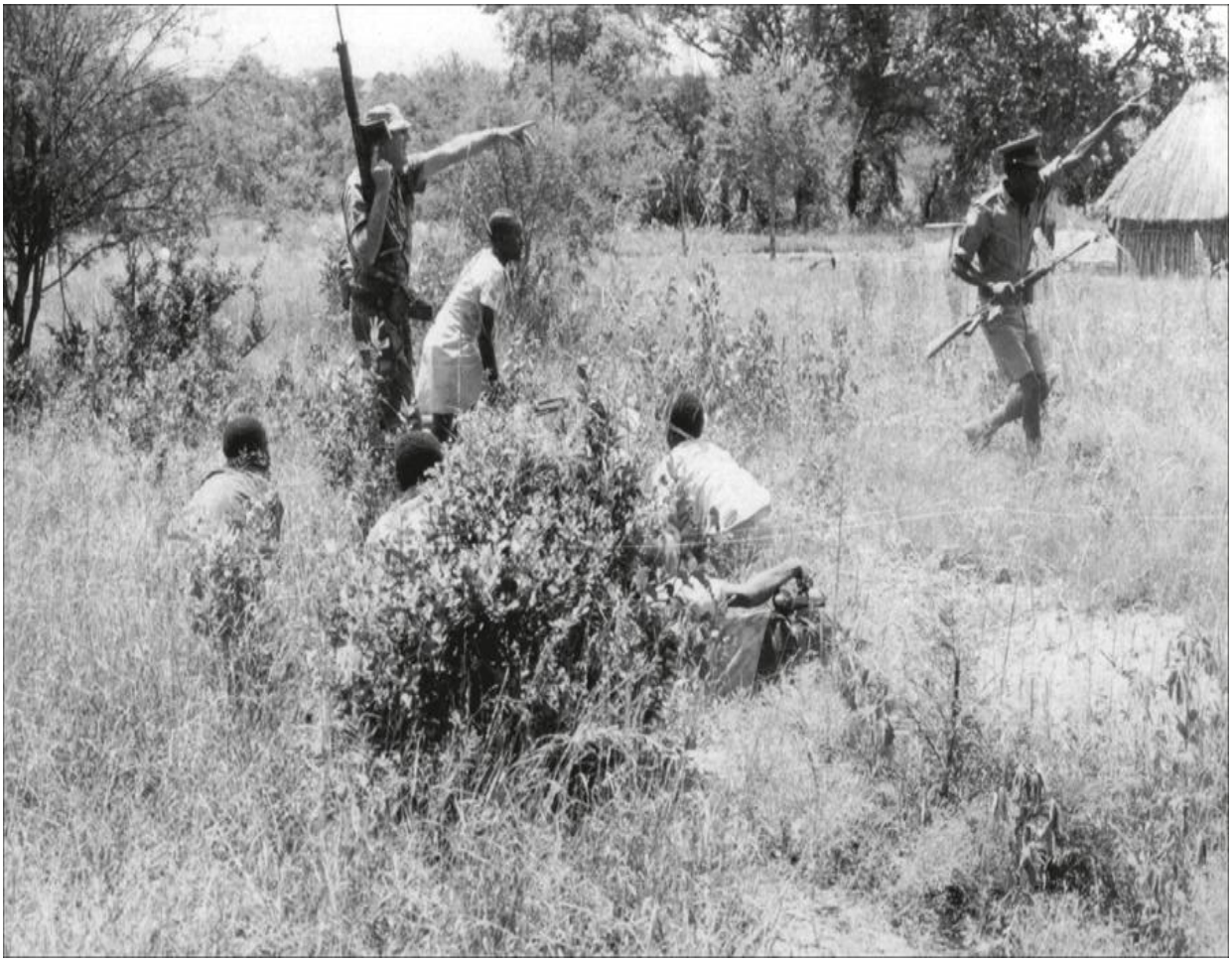
During the early years the men and women of the BSAP, whether regular or volunteer reservist, performed two functions within the defence machine. They were responsible for the gathering of intelligence and for providing the ‘boots on the ground’ in order to maintain law and order—usually as a follow-up to the intelligence they had gathered. Up to independence in 1980 this role would not change. It would be adapted in certain circumstances and indeed evolved with a not-insubstantial amount of cross-service flexibility. However, as the war gained momentum and the enemy groups crossing into Rhodesia become larger and more frequent, with the enemy adopting that all-important guerrilla strategy of subverting the local people by means fair or foul, the ordinary villagers found themselves less and less inclined to make the journey to their local police station.

By ‘swimming’ with the locals the enemy was able to stay incountry; they no longer had to hit and run and could bring in war matériel and greater numbers of insurgents. Locals were used as porters, increasing their disinclination to report insurgent groups lest they be tarred with the same brush.

Under the parental umbrella of the BSAP would also fall the Tracking Combat Unit (TCU), a largely territorial force drawn from local farmers, hunters and members of the wildlife fraternity. Akin to them would be the military's Army Tracking Unit (ATU) based at Kariba.

Apart from the BSAP Support Unit, which operated on a wholly military basis, the most successful anti-terrorist policing unit was the brainchild of Bill Bailey. Bailey gave the BSAP 21 years of service, before and after the Second World War. In North Africa he was a founding member of the Long Range Desert Group and the subsequent SAS. From that arena he moved to southern Europe.

On his return he was imbued with the thought that small, fast-moving, specialist units was the way to win wars. It took years and many knocks, scraps and frustrations but he was eventually given the go-ahead to provide BSAP regular members and reservists, along with his VATs, with anti-terrorist training (the VATs were a re-formed unit after the disbandment of Bailey's Tracker Combat Teams). The Volunteers for Advanced Training were mostly police reservists and shared a love and knowledge of the bush, physical fitness and a profound belief in the necessity of what they were doing.



BSAP members protecting civilians during a firefight.

The term PATU, or Police Anti-Terrorist Unit, was coined and training began in earnest all over the country. Incidentally this took place in 1966, after but not as a result of the Viljoen farm murders at Hartley.

It was never the intention for PATU sticks to take on the role of infantry troops; they were, first and foremost, policemen trained in the art of reconnaissance and bush craft, capable of sustaining themselves with the minimum of backup. PATU was composed largely of older men from the Police Reserve. They were particularly suited

for deployment in the reconnaissance role where conscientiousness and mental fortitude were required.

Special Branch was conceived from within the ranks of the BSAP which had always served as the country's functioning military force. During the civil unrest of the 1950s and early 1960s, a need for increased internal intelligence developed and Special Branch took over this operational intelligence gathering that had up until then been the charge of resources within the BSAP's CID, the Criminal Investigation Department.

Interestingly, systems and training closely mirrored that of the British MI5 and members of the Special Branch were indeed also privy to the counsel of and training of members by MI5 and the American CIA.

On that February day in 1978 our 4RR stick received their information on the incoming gang from their CO at Grand Reef who had in turn been informed by the BSAP's Special Branch.

As mentioned, Special Branch was formed in the very early 1960s with the task of collating information gained from its various units operating on the ground, in among the local people or independently, observing patterns and behavioural changes in local villagers; even a police constable investigating a traffic accident could stumble on vital intelligence.

Special Branch was headquartered in Salisbury and all other central police stations in the country would have a Special Branch presence, over and above the uniformed branch, CID and ground coverage personnel.

From the beginning Special Branch ran a card index system, not new to policing, called CRO or Criminal Records Office. SB/CID would collate and obtain any and all information related to crime; however, in the Rhodesian context the CRO related exclusively to the war and thus collated information from captures gained during interrogation, from captured documents and numerous other sources. All this information

would be recorded on cards. Even the serial numbers of captured weapons were recorded.

Insurgents were prolific diarists and they kept notes on everything. Their diaries recorded the full names, or Chimurenga names (noms de guerre) of each member of the group and his position in the group, whether section leader, political commissar, and so on. They noted their weapon numbers and even went as far as noting what actions they had been tasked with performing.

When a diary was captured, whether from a body or a capture, the information therein was fed into the CRO and often a match was found (of a specific incident, weapon, name etc). Should the insurgent from whom the diary was taken have been captured, Special Branch would therefore be able to interview him from a position of considerable strength. The information was so accurate that at times captures would go as far as asking whether the Rhodesians had cameras in their foreign training camps. They could simply not fathom how such information was obtained yet persisted in keeping diaries right up to the war's end.

Through the interviewing of a capture or the acquisition of a diary from a dead insurgent came the information regarding the incursion that kicks off our contact. Special Branch, furnished with this information, needed it verified, which is exactly what the 4RR stick did. Once verified they passed it back to their CO.

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* Encyclopaedia Rhodesia, Peter Bridger, Margaret House et al (eds), College Press, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1973

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CHAPTER FOUR:

SELOUS SCOUTS

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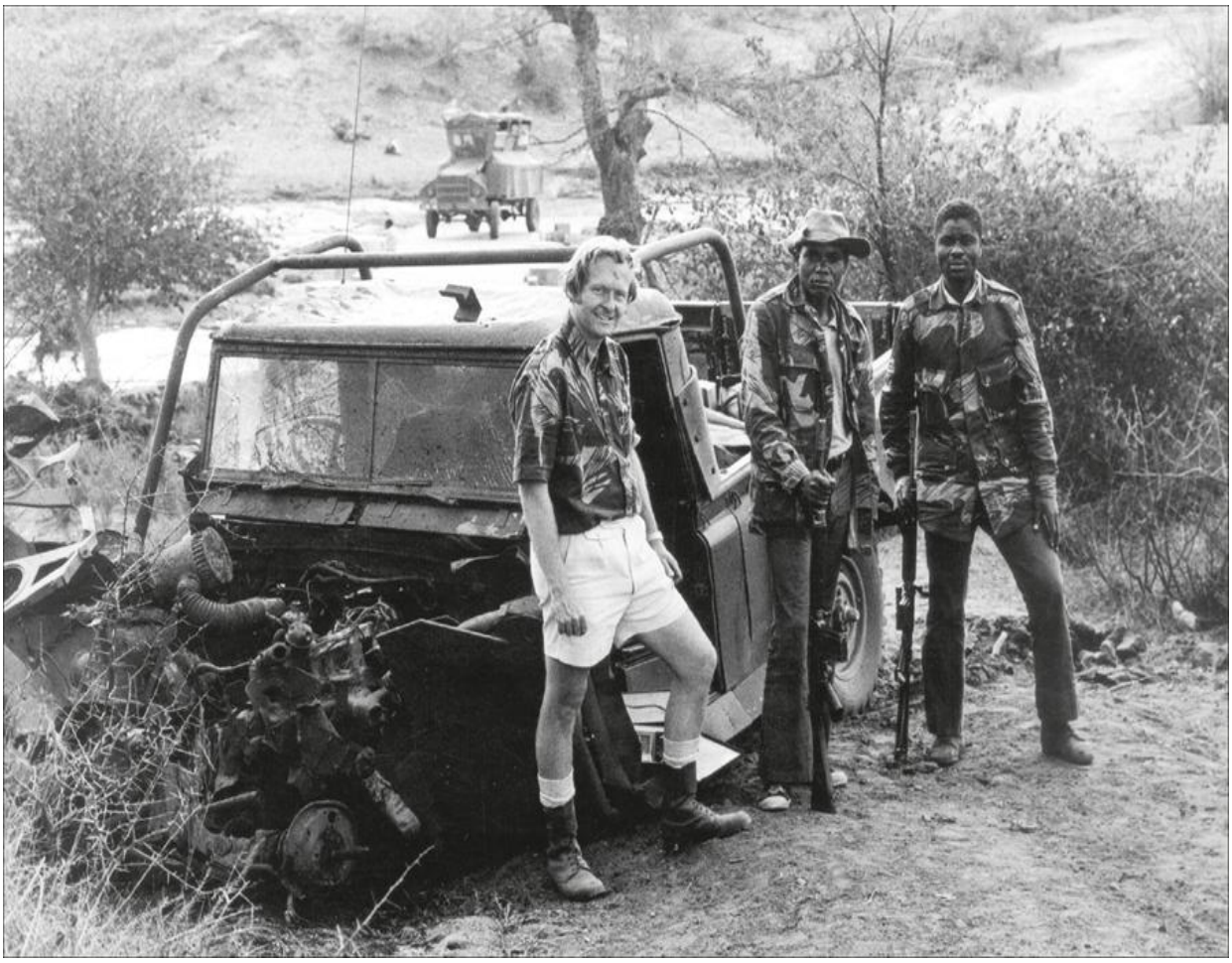
The 4RR stick could only track the large group of insurgents so far as an invisible cutline existed that denied them further passage. In order for the Selous Scout pseudo groups to operate safely and without fear of being caught in the middle of an unexpected firefight, their operational zones were ‘frozen’, meaning no other military or paramilitary unit could enter that area. Hence our information, now in the hands of the Grand Reef JOC, is passed to the Selous Scout CO, who now relays the information pertaining to the group to his men, six of whom are fortuitously based on a hill overlooking the Mutambara mountains and TTL in a well-camouflaged OP.

As with all things Fire Force this unit, the Selous Scouts, and its intelligence-gathering role had humble, thorny beginnings. The development was a gradual evolution from within the BSAP and specifically the Special Branch. Winston Hart, for example, spent much time fully immersed in Mozambique during which time he became acquainted with the Portuguese Flechas. Hart and his small team of black BSAP members were very active in the early days in feeding information from across the border in the Tete province into the northeast of Rhodesia regarding enemy activity. Hart’s time there would be invaluable to the establishment of the Selous Scouts. Pseudo operations and intelligence gathering had been the undertaking of plain-clothed policemen for decades. The Selous Scouts would be the culmination of carefully added layers of methodology.

It was during the time of operations Jacaranda and Tempest, late 1972, the precursors to Operation Hurricane that the concept of pseudo operations was first mooted in general conversation between a few Special Branch members, Detective Inspector Winston Hart, Detective Inspector Vic Opperman, both stationed at Bindura, and Detective Inspector Pete Stanton being at the forefront of these discussions. They wanted to ‘turn’ and use the three insurgents captured during Operation Tempest against their comrades to glean intelligence.



Special Branch detail Neville ‘The White Sheet’ Spurr and two SB comrades look bemused after yet another landmine detonation has destroyed their Land Rover. Photo Neville Spurr

Special Branch arch-operator Winston Hart (left) with Basil Moss (middle) and Pat Miller, seen here at the first Selous Scout base camp, Bindura, 1974

A Selous Scout prepares to deploy.

Brigadier-General John Hickman and Lieutenant-Colonel Ron Reid-Daly take the Selous Scout salute. Hickman gave his approval for the formation of the Selous Scouts and Reid-Daly was the unit's first commanding officer.

One of the first 'representative' JOCs was formed to deal with this minor incursion at Kotwa—a desolate place on the northeastern border just south of Nyamapanda and slightly northeast of Mtoko—and code-named Tempest. It was in this area that the three ZANLA cadres had been arrested. Kotwa boasted nothing but a hut and a good airstrip yet would be used throughout the war as a temporary

Fire Force base and FAF due to its close proximity to the country's far northeastern border.

Mukumbura police base camp on the Mozambican border. Bordering the Tete Province, it was here that Special Branch conducted many of their earlier intelligence-gathering operations.

However, the thinking of the government at the time was to make an example of the trio and as such they were tried in the criminal courts, found guilty and hanged. Undeterred, discussions regarding the

establishment of a pseudo-operations unit continued in terms of an additional channel of seeking information on the ground.

It was thus decided that it was possible to act as a pseudo group to gain intelligence from the locals and from face-to-face meetings with insurgent groups proper. The concept worked.

Special Branch held a file called XYS-4949, the ‘S’ standing for ‘subject’ and the ‘4949’ being any reference to pseudo operations. At this early stage it contained the specifics of the five whites and a handful of turned captures (from Mozambique) who were passing themselves off as insurgents in order to obtain information that would, without this type of deep infiltration, not have been available to the Rhodesian special forces.

It was very successful but logistically arduous: Special Branch had to deploy and maintain the pseudo operatives themselves, as well as take care of their families. Thus, in 1973, it was decided to approach the military with the concept. Brigadier Hickman—at that time commander of Operation Hurricane—was receptive to the idea and thus the idea of the Selous Scouts Regiment was born, with Captain Ron Reid-Daly hauled out of retirement to become the first commanding officer.

Later the Selous Scouts would flex their muscles and learn their own lessons regarding intelligence gathering, command and control and execution. In the first instance, in April 1974, it was noticed by an operative that between 40 and 50 ZANLA were moving randomly between three bases in the Chiweshe TTL area of Operation Hurricane. Their constant movement and the location of the bases in heavily populated areas made close-in observation for a Fire Force reaction impossible. After much persuasion at Bindura JOC, it was agreed that all three bases would be attacked at dawn the following morning since it was not known in which base ZANLA would be resident. It would be a bombing attack, after which the Fire Force would be employed to block any movement from the base then identified as the one occupied.

Selous Scout Captain Chris Schulenberg deploying by Alouette on a long-range reconnaissance mission in Mozambique.

A Rhodesia Regiment machine-gunner fronts a stick of territorials.

A group of Selous Scouts.

As all the aircraft were on track to target, and it should be mentioned that every available aircraft had been scratched together for this operation, the Selous Scout operative who had first come forward with the information made it known that he had established Camp C as the target. Immediately the attacks on camps A and B were cancelled but the last-minute change and a broken telephone effectively saw camps A and B blown to smithereens while the ZANLA cadres quietly slipped away out of Camp C.

Desperate to rectify this monumental disaster, it was soon established via the bush telegraph that 15 ZANLA insurgents were at Bobogarande. A reconnaissance of the area revealed two camps of 30 and 40 guerrillas each. To the enormous frustration of the Scouts the RAR was deployed very late and the army commander stationed himself on a hilltop with zero visibility to conduct the battle à la Edward I, 'Hammer of the Scots'. While waiting for the RAR and for the army commander to engage, the enemy was naturally making a break for it.

To avoid another disaster a senior Selous Scout and pilot took command, resulting in a running battle. According to a capture 26 cadres were in camp when the helicopters arrived over their target. The RAR acquitted themselves well during this successful ad hoc Selous Scout-commanded operation.

Again, better communication and inter-unit support were the key to a successful operation. But the time for teething problems was fast running out. By the time our contact takes place the Selous Scouts have cut their teeth in numerous operations and now our six-man OP takes the reins. The gang has entered their turf and careful observation is necessary to furnish the JOC with as much detail about the group as possible. This intelligence is relayed to Fire Force Grand Reef.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

SIREN

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On receipt of this information from the Selous Scouts, the JOC commander activates the Fire Force. Of the 70–90 combat-ready men available at a JOC, roughly a third would be on immediate stand-by, a third on 30 minutes' call and the remainder available at longer notice.

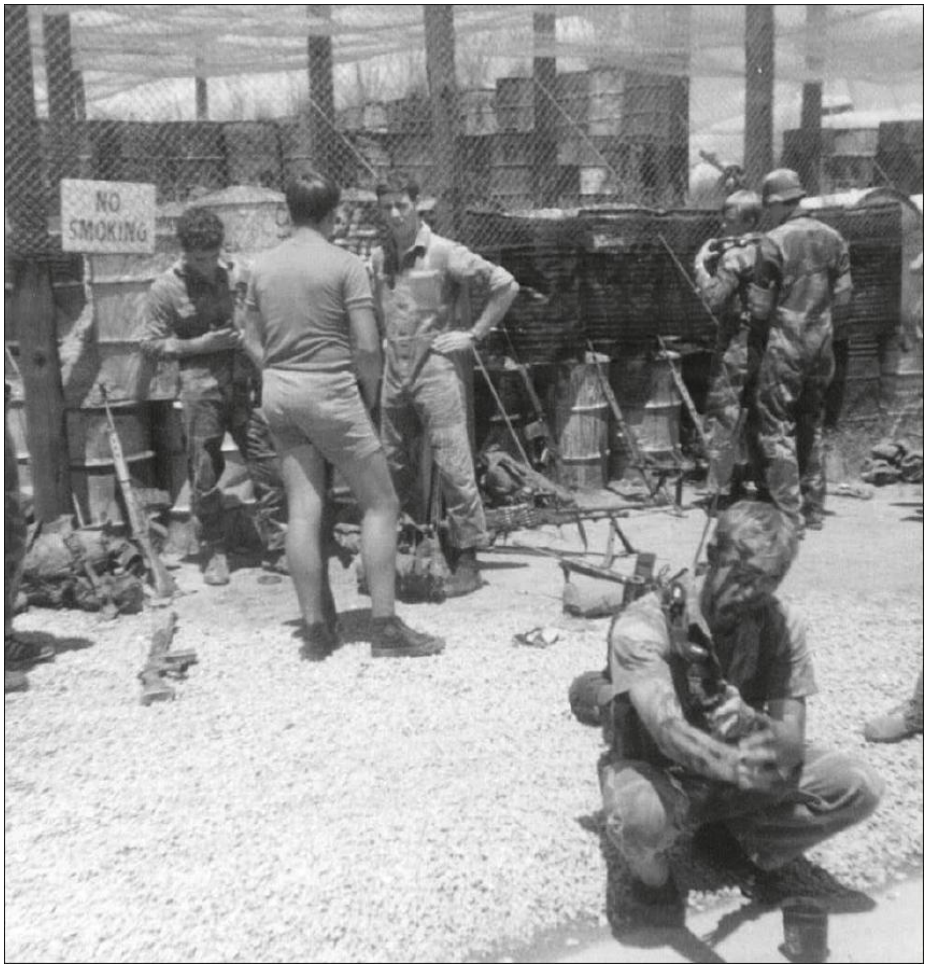
All Fire Force bases operated at a constant state of readiness. Shortly before first light the troops would take the equipment they needed, be it Stops 1, 2 and 3 to the helicopters or Stops 4, 5 and 6 to the Landtail or the additional four or five Para Stops to the Dakota, and position it next to the aircraft.

The vehicle-borne second- and third-wave troops, or Landtail, was a convoy of trucks (around three or four Mercedes 4.5s or armoured 7-tonne Nissan 'Crocodiles') already pre-loaded with at least ten drums of aviation fuel, extra helicopter and small-arms ammunition, spare radio batteries, a well-equipped medical set-up and rations, and would depart the base immediately with Stops 4 to 6 and 7 to 9 aboard, under command of the company or commando sergeant-major. The Landtail made all haste to get as close to the contact area as possible —preferably on tar roads to avoid landmines—and set up a temporary admin base, either at a bush airstrip or at a rural police station in the vicinity, but more often than not on the side of a tar road.

Commanding the Landtail was no small task; often the CSM or the CQ, or in some cases a senior corporal, would be charged with its

command. Attention to administrative, logistical and resource details was imperative. The Landtail commander had to be a skilled map reader as very often the target was located in dense bush off an arterial road and fine navigational skills on tertiary roads or bush tracks were often called for.

The army commander would take his equipment with his rifle and radios and put it in the K-Car. Thereafter the troops would return for breakfast and their early morning inspections and pokey drill (weapons callisthenics) and the commander would attend a briefing with the air force and local intelligence officers to get an idea of what was happening in the area and what they might expect regarding call-outs that day.



3 Commando 1RLI Fire Force troops blacken up with camouflage cream prior to boarding the G-Cars. Photo Claude Botha

The maps for the area where call-outs were probable were readied, the air force technicians would be giving their aircraft a thorough going-over, ensuring they were fuelled up and armed.

With this in mind the troops and commanding officers were close by and alert to the fact that the JOC commander could activate the klaxon-type siren (or even a car hooter) at any moment.

Many parallel activities took place the moment that siren wailed. The aircraft technicians would go directly to their aircraft and pull off the gun covers, the pilots, army and air force commanders as well as any other relevant JOC members would head directly to the briefing room and the troops would make haste respectively to the Alouettes, the Dakota or the Landtail vehicles.

An impromptu Fire Force briefing at Grand Reef, 1978. An RLI lance-corporal outlines the plan of attack to his troops. Kneeling on the right checking out their maps are a G-Car pilot and his gunner-technician. Photo Tom Argyle

A G-Car with its Fire Force troops ready to start up. The gunner-technician checks his Brownings and will don his flak jacket at the last second, after ensuring the pilot and troops are safely aboard. Photo Tom Argyle

The army commander and senior air force commander and pilots would, time permitting, be briefed on the target. At that stage some preliminary planning would take place regarding how the target was going to be approached. Many things needed to be considered before getting airborne, one of the primary factors was fuel. Fuel was positioned all over the country, about 20 minutes' flying time from any one place. Thus if the target was at or approaching the helicopter's

outer range—where it would have consumed half its fuel just getting to the target—other dynamics came into play such as the question of refuelling on the way; however, this might be countered by time pressures at the target. The last thing any commander wanted was to arrive at a target and find his aircraft exhausted of fuel.

Between the army and air force commanders a provisional plan was instituted regarding where they wanted to position the troops, where they wanted the Dakota to hold with the paratroops and where they would like any other fixed-wing aircraft, such as the Lynx, to hold.

The briefing would also include the enemy locstat (grid reference position), enemy numbers, or suspected numbers, the weapons they were carrying and what they were wearing—most often the enemy wore blue denims or dark clothing (they would also commonly be wearing two or even three layers of clothing in order to shed a layer so that when the helicopters passed over they were not what had been described and could simply blend in with the local populace). The briefing would also cover which other army call signs were already operational in the area.

A G-Car prepares for take-off as the RLI MAG gunner looks appropriately pensive. Photo Tom Argyle

Based on the information provided at the briefing, the army commander, with the able assistance of the air force commander, would decide, based on the number of insurgents, where the Dakota paratroop sticks would be required and whether or not, depending on the distance to the target, if the Landtail was needed. In this case, 50-odd ZANLA insurgents based 30–40-minutes' flying time from Grand Reef necessitated both.

It would further be decided where the Fire Force temporary operational base would be positioned. In our case Nyanyadzi was identified as the most suitable as it was equipped with a police station, had a dirt airstrip adequate for the Dakota and the Lynx and was already supplied with reasonable deposits of aviation fuel.

Since the Dakota's flying time was that much shorter than the Alouettes', it would also be decided how long after the helicopters and Landtail the Dakota would take off.

A 1 Commando 1RLI Fire Force prepares to move out.

RAR paratroopers ‘kit up’ at the Fire Force para tent.

These RLI paras will be ready to board the Dakota after the dispatchers have completed their equipment check. Photo Tom Argyle

RLI paras standing by to emplane.

The Landtail would use the Umtali–Chipinga tar road with travel time estimated at two hours. It is important to note that very often the Landtail might be utilized on the side of the road while en route to its prearranged temporary base if required sooner. Helicopters refuelling and the uplift of additional troops (second wave) on the roadside were not uncommon.

At times, because of the nature of the call-out, where it looked as though the enemy might move off fairly quickly, the Fire Force would not even bother with a pre-take-off briefing. They would get airborne

immediately, the target, the grid reference, the description of the target and the call sign on the ground only being given once airborne. However, even in these cases the fuel factor was still the dominant consideration. Failed Fire Force actions often boiled down to poor fuel planning.

Also at this time call signs would be checked and briefed. Time permitting, the army commander would run through pertinent details with the stick commanders as quickly as possible before getting airborne, often on the ground next to the helicopters.

The Grand Reef JOC did not then sit back and await the return of the conquering armada. The intelligence team would now activate their members and in this case the closest Special Branch member stationed at Chipinga would immediately make his way to Nyanyadzi should he be required to take possession of captured documents or insurgents, in which case his skills as an interviewer would be required.

Although this does not apply to our hypothetical contact, there were often cases when the Selous Scout frozen areas remained so; the operatives would not be compromised as in our contact and their presence there would be made known to all base commanders, Internal Affairs and Guard Force commanders, the district commissioner, Special Branch and anyone else deemed necessary of being in the know.

After the briefing the pilots would make their way to their aircraft, the army commander would join the air force commander in the K-Car and the base CSM or CQ would make haste to the Landtail (which might well have departed before the aircraft).

RAR paras boarding.

The pilots had exceptional navigational skills; they relied solely on the bubble compass and their maps, a 1:500,000 or 1:250,000 and possibly several 1:50,000s. Pilots would have customized their maps by marking fuel positions, police stations, features and anything else of interest or use to them.

The pilot had many responsibilities in a Fire Force: he would need to be able to visualize the entire operation from the army commander's perspective, and he would have one eye on the fuel gauge at all times (when the red light came on the pilot had 13 minutes in which to land).

For a moment let's also examine the additional responsibilities of the engineer, the gunner-technician. We've discussed the importance of accurate shooting and the maintenance of the rotor blades and sand filters; however, the engineer also had to, at all times, be aware of the situation on the ground (and in the air) and where the enemy was and know exactly what was happening on the helicopter's instrument panel.

In a contact situation the K-Car army and air force commanders would be so tuned in to one another that it was possible, should the army commander for some reason be out of commission for a period during the contact, the air force commander could seamlessly take over control of the battle until such time as the army commander was back in the saddle. The success of this was in some part due to the exercises undertaken to improve the understanding between the army and the air force over the years and thus build relationships and communication that would stand both service arms in such good stead that they would contribute in no small way to contacts such as ours. In order to greater understand and appreciate each other's challenges and tasks, the army and air force hosted one another in training exercises. Forward Air Control (FAC) training had taught army officers how to direct airstrikes in combat situations. Additionally, Ground-to-Air Control (GAC) gave army officers the opportunity to experience and appreciate the air perspective from Provost, Trojan and the latterly Lynx strike aircraft and conversely gave pilots a ground perspective. Procedures and techniques were modified and improved until GAC procedures were considered ready for operations.

A note from Petter-Bowyer on the subject:

On the ground the commander of an army call sign would have a good idea of an enemy force's disposition and where one or more airstrikes needed to be placed. Generally he would also know the air weapon best suited considering the enemy's situation and how close his troops would be to the strike. Guns and frantans [napalm] could be used as

close as 30 metres but bombs and rockets needed more than 100 metres to cater for potential errors and shrapnel effect. A pilot had to know with certainty the disposition of the entire call sign calling for support—we called this the FLOT [Front Line Own Troops]. He also needed to know the nature of support required to be certain of selecting the correct weapon switches, the direction of attack, enemy distance from FLOT, and the precise position he had to strike. FLOT was seldom a straight line so only the extremities of troops nearest the enemy were marked. This could be done in a number of ways. The simplest of these was an unfolded map placed upside down on the ground but this usually delayed the airstrike because a pilot might not see the small white markers in heavy bush conditions until he was directly above the call sign.

The preferred method of marking was by smoke grenades, yellow and white were best, which could be used as soon as the call sign could clearly see or hear the approaching aircraft. Too often in operations, heavy ground fire made this difficult so an initial indication of a call sign's position might need a single highly visible white phosphorus grenade. It was then up to the pilot to call for FLOT markers when he was close enough for his attack.

FLOT markers provided a pilot the reference line for his attack direction. As soon as he had FLOT he would position to attack along that line. At 'perch' (start of attack dive) the pilot would call "Mark target", whereupon the ground commander fired a red flare which he attempted to place in the centre of the intended strike point.

By the time the flare reached ground the attacking aircraft was usually established in its attack-dive. The call sign commander would then give quick corrections. He would either call "On target", if the flare had landed where he intended or give corrections ADD or DROP, LEFT or RIGHT with appropriate distances. Typically this might be, "To my marker, Drop 20 – left 10". Add and Drop, Left and Right corrections all related to the aircraft attack-line. This meant that the GAC soldier

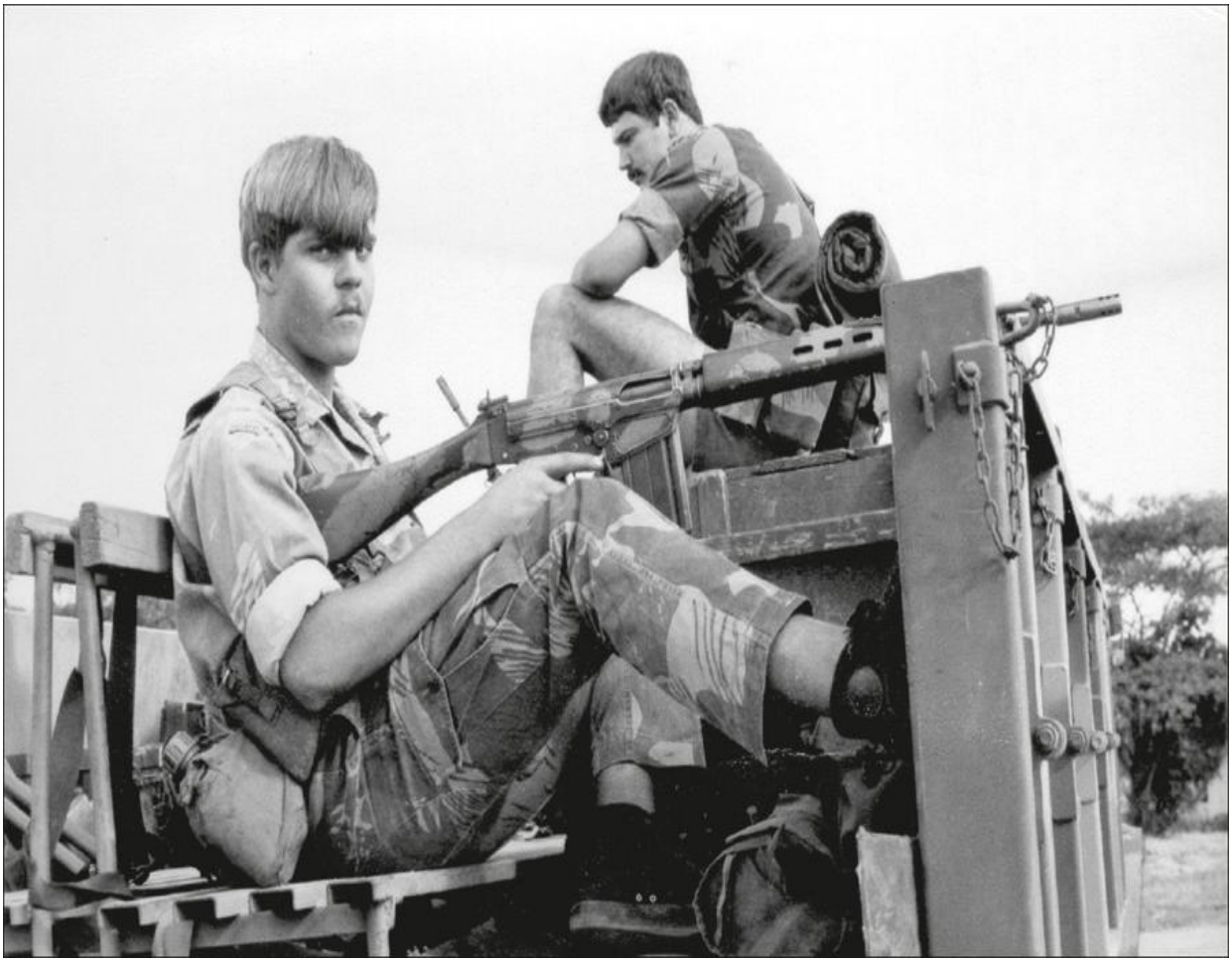
on the ground had to adopt the pilot's perspective to bring about the corrections he wanted.

We perfected procedures and ran many successful courses for all RLI, RAR and Territorial Army platoon commanders and senior NCOs. Interservice and personal relationships that developed between the bush squadrons (ourselves and helicopters) and the army's fighting soldiers proved to be of immense importance in operations.

When our GAC procedures were eventually used in 'hot' operations, marking FLOT became impossible during high-stress running firefights, but pilots were able to adapt by attacking at 90 degrees to a single marker flare and responding to the usual corrections.

4 Squadron was doing well, morale was high and training had become interesting. We flew many first-light and last-light GAC strikes and also made first-run attacks on targets marked by airborne FAC using 37mm SNEB rockets. Realizing it may be necessary to call in a number of aircraft from different locations to link up for combined first-light strikes, we ran exercises in which three or four aircraft met before dawn at a prearranged position well away from target. Meeting in the dark required height separation initially and cautious manoeuvring to come into formation on the navigation lights of the assigned strike leader. There was something magical about those early morning flights when the progressive brightening of the sky revealed the black shapes of Provosts, or Trojans, flying together in loose formation.

First light for call signs on the ground occurred as much as 20 minutes before pilots' visual contact with ground was good enough to safely make diving attacks. Only by flying with us did army officers appreciate our problem. In consequence, any ground force needing close air support at dawn always had to endure an agonizingly long wait beyond 'soldiers' first light' for 'pilots' first light'.



2 Commando 1RLI Landtail troops prepare to move out.

An RLI subaltern issues instructions to his Landtail troops as an Alouette comes in to refuel on the side of a tar road. Photo Claude Botha

Petter-Bowyer takes it a step further and here discusses the intricacies of airborne FAC:

Using a Provost, I marked the target with smoke rockets at precisely 4 o'clock and pulled up into a steep climbing turn to watch the lead Hunter's 30mm cannon strike running right through the centre of the target. Three following Hunters, responding to my directions,

patterned their 68mm Marta rocket strikes perfectly. As the Hunters cleared, I moved back over the target and saw many civilians running helter-skelter from the nearest village.

Helicopters dropped off troops who found the fresh base well laced by cannon and rocket shrapnel. Unfortunately there had been no terrorists in residence at the time. Later we established that the terrorists had been with civilians at a beer-drink in the very village from which I had seen so many people running. I had been mistaken in thinking these were all innocent civvies, thereby losing the chance of diverting the helicopters and troops onto a good opportunity target.

This, my first attempt at directing jets by airborne FAC, had worked better for the jet pilots than any one of many GAC strikes made over-border in support of SAS operations. The secret to success in first-run strikes under FAC control lay in four basic factors. These were, good timing, minimal radio chatter, excellent visual markers at target centre and control by a pilot who knew the precise location and extremities of the target and had witnessed the placement of each aircraft's strike.

Air Staff was not put off by the absence of terrorists; rather it commented that this strike had proven that airborne FAC could provide consistent precision and allow jets to strike closer to troops and civilians than had previously been considered possible.

RLI Landtail troops arriving at a temporary Fire Force base where a Lynx has already landed to re-arm.

Drums of ‘avgas’ (aviation fuel) were scattered in various locations across the country to keep the Fire Forces airborne.

RHODESIA
Tete Province
ZAMBIA
OP SPLINTER
OP HURRICANE
Caprivi Strip
Victoria Falls
Deka Base Camp
Wankie
Binga
Kariba
Kanyemba
Mana Pools
Chirundu
Makuti
Sipolilo
Centenary
Mt Darwin
Karoi
Mangula
Umvukwes
Nyamapanda
Kotwa
Sinoia
Banket
Bindura
Shamva
Mtoko
Mrewa
SALISBURY
Norton
New Sarum
Macheke
Inyanga
Marandellas
Hartley
Beatrice
Gatooma
Gokwe
Flyde
Ruisape
Wedza
OP GRAPPLE
OP THRASHER
Lupane
Que Que
Enkeldoorn
Grand Reef
UMTALI
Buhera
Gwelo
Thornhill
Gutu
Hot Springs
Nyanyadzi
Melsetter
Glen Clova
BOTSWANA
OP TANGENT
BULAWAYO
Heany Junction
Llewellin Barracks
Mashaba
Fort Victoria
Shabani
Chibi
Zaka
Chipinga
Mt Silinda
Plumtree
OP REPULSE
Gwanda
West Nicholson
Buffalo Range
Triangle
Chiredzi
Rutenga
Nuanetsi
Mabalauta
Tuli
Beitbridge
Malapati
Vila Salazar
MOZAMBIQUE
SOUTH AFRICA
FAF 1
FAF 2
FAF 3
FAF 4
FAF 5
FAF 6
FAF 7
FAF 8
FAF 9
FAF 10
KEY
Main Road
Secondary Road
River
Border
ZANLA Assembly Point
Scale
50
100
150 kilometres

2 Commando 1RLI troops preparing their kit in an elevated temporary base camp. Photo Fraser Brown

An RLI trooper sweeps past a burning kraal.

A G-Car door-mounted MAG with Collimateur sights.

Hawker Hunter.

English Electric Canberra.

A Dakota comes in to land at a bush strip. Photo Ed Bird

A brace of Lynxes flies into stormy weather.

RLI paras coming into their DZ. Photo Giles Gillespie

An RLI para poses in front of a Dakota. Note the MAG strapped to his right side and his ‘bone-dome’ motorbike helmet. Photo courtesy Rob Marsh

A G-Car resupplying ammunition touches down in an open LZ.

An American RLI trooper on his para course in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Photo Tom Argyle

Selous Scouts emplaning to a Dakota for an operational deployment.
Photo courtesy Craig Fourie

A Rhodesia Regiment (RR) stick leader. Photo John Cowper

Support Commando 1RLI troops emplane. Photo Lang Price

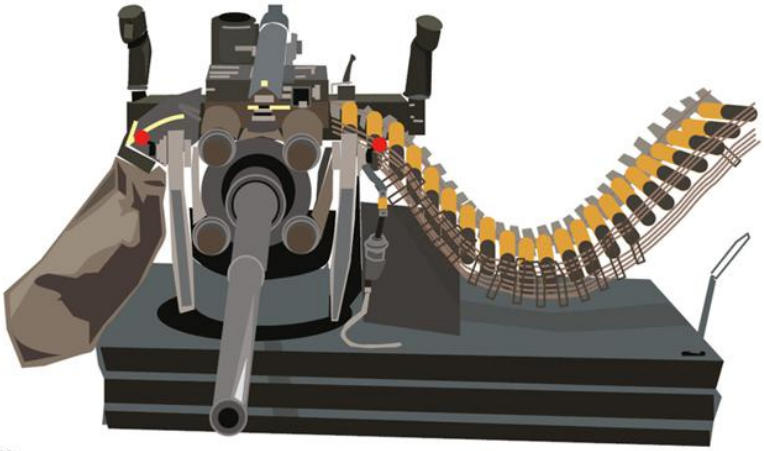
RLI troops sweeping through Lowveld mopane woodland. Photo Jon Caffin

RLI troops regroup on SAAF Pumas in an LZ. Pumas saw service in Rhodesia in the closing months of the war. Photo courtesy Craig Fourie

A Fire Force—one K-Car, three G-Cars a Lynx (right foreground) and an armoured 7-tonne ‘Crocodile’ troop-carrier—stands by at a bush airstrip. Photo Theo Nel

The same Fire Force, with a G-car in the foreground. Photo Theo Nel

Fire Force Alouette Ills at the end of the day.



Weight 42 kg
Length 1.76 metre
Cartridge 20 x 82 mm cartridge
Calibre 20 mm
Rate of fire 600-750 rpm
Muzzle velocity 720 m/s

Matra MG151 20mm cannon

J.R.T. Wood

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CHAPTER SIX:

TAKE-OFF TO TARGET

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The pilots would then start up—the K-Car first and the G-Cars behind.

In the helicopter the stick's MAG gunner would sit behind the pilot, two riflemen would sit in the front facing backward, with another rifleman, the stick leader, sitting next to the MAG gunner, in between him and the gunner-technician. Once everyone was on board the gunner-technician would help the pilot strap in and make sure everyone else was where they should be.

In the K-Car the army commander would sit in the front rear-facing seat and between him and the pilot they would be in radio contact with the call sign on the ground that had initiated the Fire Force call-out and had the enemy visual.

In the G-Cars the stick leader, sitting in the middle in the back, would put on a radio headset and listen to all the radio banter so that he could inform the rest of the men in his stick, using hand signals, of what was happening.

While the K-Car and G-Cars made haste to get airborne, the Landtail, engines already revving when the siren had sounded, would leave for Nyanyadzi.

Once the K-Car had fully wound up, he would make comms with the pilots of each of the G-Cars, the Lynx and the Dakota to ensure they had radio communication. The K-Car would start taxiing when every

other aircraft had checked in, reading each other ‘strength fives’ and once they were all fully wound up.

Once the K-Car was airborne, the three G-Cars would format behind him and a further radio check would take place. The gunner-technicians would ask their pilots permission to cock their guns, to which the pilots would give their consent. The guns would then be live.

The Selous Scout call sign on the ground that the K-Car commander and pilot would be talking to was positioned on higher ground looking down on the enemy base and the activity below.

This sequence of four photos captures a G-Car uplift of Fire Force troops and a rolling take-off from a FAF runway.

Although we have used a Selous Scout OP for the purposes of this narrative, during the course of the war it could just as easily have been a TF, RAR, BSAP Support Unit, PATU or even an RLI OP. At no stage should the drama of the deadly K-Car and lethally armed G-Cars with the sticks of highly trained troops overshadow the skilled and disciplined soldiering that setting up an observation post entailed and the importance of that OP in the overall intelligence cycle.

In an area infiltrated by small groups of lightly equipped enemy insurgents—who blended with the local population and importantly and did not want to be found by the Rhodesian security forces, as their role was not to fight a conventional war but to win over and politicize the civilians—observation posts would be concealed; they would wait

and watch and often identify enemy activity, thus becoming the initiation point of a Fire Force call-out.

The idea of the OP was to walk in undetected through areas of countryside that were heavily populated. These could be across some 25 to 30 kilometres at night. The Rhodesian army became highly skilled at OP operations, particularly from late 1975 onward. Former A Company 2RAR lieutenant Alan Thrush recalls a comment made by a former British army commander regarding the skill of the Rhodesian OP when a Territorial Force's OP 'talk on' was only out by 500 metres from a six-figure grid reference. This former British major commented that that would have been unheard of in the British army at the time.

Getting into position was the trickiest part to the OP operation, especially in the eastern areas of the country as they were the most densely populated with enemy guerrillas, and the enemy was well aware that this was a favoured area of OP infiltration. Walking in was hard, physical work, either in hot, humid daylight hours or, more commonly, at night which held its own set of dangers and challenges. The units often wore 'clandestine' boots that left no imprint so villagers would know that a group of men had passed through but would not be able to tell if they were security forces or insurgents. The security forces would walk in as quickly and as quietly as possible and indeed the RAR became so proficient at it—they could move so silently through the dense bush and into position—that when dawn broke they would be, almost literally, on top of an enemy position, undetected.

The danger of walking into an ambush when taking occupation of the OP generally required that occupation be taken before first light. The key to an OP was discipline and the RAR were masters of it. A unit could be on OP for a fortnight, or in the case of the Selous Scouts even longer. Water discipline was crucial. All water was carried in. Should the OP run short of water, elements would be sent out at night to fetch it from possibly a nearby stream at the foot of the hill, thereby risking compromise. Movement and noise discipline were essential, the former mostly during daylight hours and the latter constantly.

Throughout, the most important discipline was to stay alert. Of a four-man stick, one would have the binoculars while the other three ‘rested’ yet remained alert in case of compromise (normally by mujibas, local teenage boys acting as the eyes and ears of the guerrillas, herding livestock supposedly in search of grazing).

The Lynx (a Reims Cessna 337G) parked in the FAF base revetments.

A Hawker Hunter buzzes the Mount Darwin Fire Force base.

A G-Car banks left.

There were several elements to an OP; one was to locate the enemy —walk in, get into an elevated position undetected and simply wait and watch. There were hundreds of OPs throughout the country at any given time. It is interesting to note here that there were only five Fire Forces available throughout the country reacting to dozens of potential OP sightings on any given day. But more often than not these randomly placed OPs would turn up empty-handed.

These non-specific OPs would watch behavioural patterns of the local villagers. As mentioned by Chris Cocks in his book Fireforce—One

Man's War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry, he slowly became aware that local women were carrying food to the dense bush of a nearby river at the same time every morning. In the latter years of the war it was mostly only old men and very young boys that made up the male component of a village so this behaviour and daily routine of the women was highly suspicious. A successful Fire Force was brought to bear in this instance.

Another element of an OP was to approach a known enemy position for the purpose of intelligence gathering—enemy numbers, daily routines, what they were wearing—through constant observation, gaining some idea of who held what rank or position within the enemy unit, etc. Once as much information had been recorded, it was forwarded to the nearest JOC or that unit's CO.

Our six-man Selous Scout OP overlooking the Mutambara enemy base is now in constant communication with the approaching Fire Force commander. All other radio chatter has died and pilots, stick leaders, the Dakota pilot and No. 1 dispatcher as well as the Lynx pilot are all tuned in to the information coming from the OP.

The helicopters approach from a very low level, literally tree-top level, to diminish noise from the main rotor blades.

En route the Lynx flies above the Alouettes and trails some distance behind. If at any time radio communication problems are experienced, the Lynx will be used to relay information to the K-Car, acting as Telstar.

A word on the Lynx: as with the other elements of the successful Fire Force, this civilian training plane was obligatory to the success of the Fire Force.

In order to appreciate the Lynx airstrikes and their effect regarding softening-up of targets and getting groups of enemy insurgents to bombshell as in the case of our contact, it is necessary for a moment to understand this strike aircraft's humble beginnings within the Rhodesian Air Force.

Two Percival Pembrokes and 13 Percival Provost T52s were transferred to Southern Rhodesia at the break-up of Federation.

The piston-engine Percival Provost, a light training aircraft, was modified into a fairly lethal attack aircraft with two .303 Browning machine guns in the wings and the capacity to carry napalm, bombs and rockets. It was used in support of the K-Car for initial strikes when the enemy had numerical superiority or to 'soften up' the target. Although it was aging and needed to be replaced, it would never totally disappear from the combat arena but the fleet size would dwindle as the years went by.

The Italian-made Aermacchi Lockheed AL60-B2L, or what the Rhodesians referred to as the Trojan, was the only light aircraft available to partially replace the Provost—which had incidentally already replaced the Percival Pembroke. It was a noisy aircraft capable of carrying four passengers. It was used for aerial reconnaissance and in its Fire Force role as a supporting aircraft. It had many limitations, one of which was its incredible sensitivity to air currents; another was that while it could fire 37mm SNEB rockets, it could not carry machine guns and thus could not deliver bombs. This shortcoming would inhibit the development of Fire Force and the Trojan would thus have to be 'replaced'—the Rhodesian definition of 'replace' was more akin to 'supersede' as the Provosts and Trojans would, in diminishing numbers, continue to play a role. The Rhodesians could simply not afford to simply exchange one aircraft for another.

The Trojan was replaced by the Lynx, or more correctly the Reims Cessna 337G civilian aircraft. It was made capable of carrying bombs, rockets and .303 machine guns fitted in pods above the cabin. The Lynx now gave the Fire Force a fast, lethal, light aircraft with a long

range that would be used, as had its predecessors, in support of the K-Car, but also on external operations, for reconnaissance, in a command role as Telstar and for a number of other purposes.

While running in, the K-Car commander and pilot (with the G-Cars listening in) would be asking questions as to the movement of the enemy and what they were doing. Due to their advantageous vantage point, the Selous Scout OP would be watching the entire area, keeping a special eye out for signs that the enemy had heard the approach of the Fire Force. If the noise of the approaching helicopters had been heard by the enemy they would melt away, blending in among the civilians, or bombshell—split up into twos and threes and head off in divergent directions, in which case they would be almost impossible to find. Thus speed and an almost noiseless approach were imperative.

Five minutes out from the target the K-Car would pull up and inform the rest of the section that it had done so. The K-Car would pull up to a low level, an altitude of 800 feet above ground level. At that time the OP would be standing by, ready to proceed with the talk-on. Once the OP's position had been established via a successful talk-on and the identification of themselves with either the white reverse side of a map or an orange Day-Glo panel, the K-Car would then fly overhead their position while a further talk-on would identify the enemy position. Once the K-Car heard "Overhead" from the OP regarding the enemy position, the helicopter gunner-technician would be standing by with a large white smoke marker. The marker would emit a dense white smoke and last about three minutes. Once it had been dropped, the OP would issue corrections. These could be anything from "Turn left, add fifty" to informing the K-Car they were several hundred metres off. Everything at this juncture rested on a succinct, successful talk-on. One of the common mistakes came when the OP, facing the approaching K-Car, would forget that his left and right sides were the pilot's right and left sides respectively.

This was the Fire Force's make-or-break moment. Once the smoke was dropped, the Fire Force presence became known to the enemy, if it wasn't already, and depending on its proximity to target, it could either contain the enemy by proceeding with the troop deployment or lose the advantage. Thus a fast, successful talk-on was the key: guiding the Fire Force quickly, directly over the target. The talk-on was a science, a knack that some OP commanders had and others just didn't. (A reasonable use of English was also imperative.) A good OP commander was able to almost transpose himself into the pilot's or the K-Car commander's position, to form a visual picture of what the pilot and army commander were seeing—a mirror image of what the OP commander was seeing. He would not wait for the K-Car to ask questions; he would immediately begin to describe the terrain and point out obvious features. He would select one reference point that could be clearly seen from the air and would begin to talk the K-Car onto that landmark.

An example of a talk-on:

Talking an aircraft onto your position or onto a target was more difficult than it may sound. Many struggled with this concept especially within a stressful environment, resulting in frustrated airmen turning around and returning to base, their element of surprise through speed eliminated. It was essential that the OP commander remain calm and remember the basic rule: 'Your right is the pilot's left' as you would be facing the approaching aircraft. From your OP or other position you would suddenly hear a call from the helicopter (at this time you would not have heard the helicopter) saying, for example, "Three-one Alpha, this is Kilo Nine, do you read?" You know from the minute you received that communication initiation that you had no more than a couple of minutes to ready yourself to talk in the Fire Force's approaching aircraft.

As soon as the OP commander had the K-Car visual the pilot would be advised accordingly: "Kilo Nine, I have you visual."

The pilot will respond: “Roger that. Talk me on to your position.”

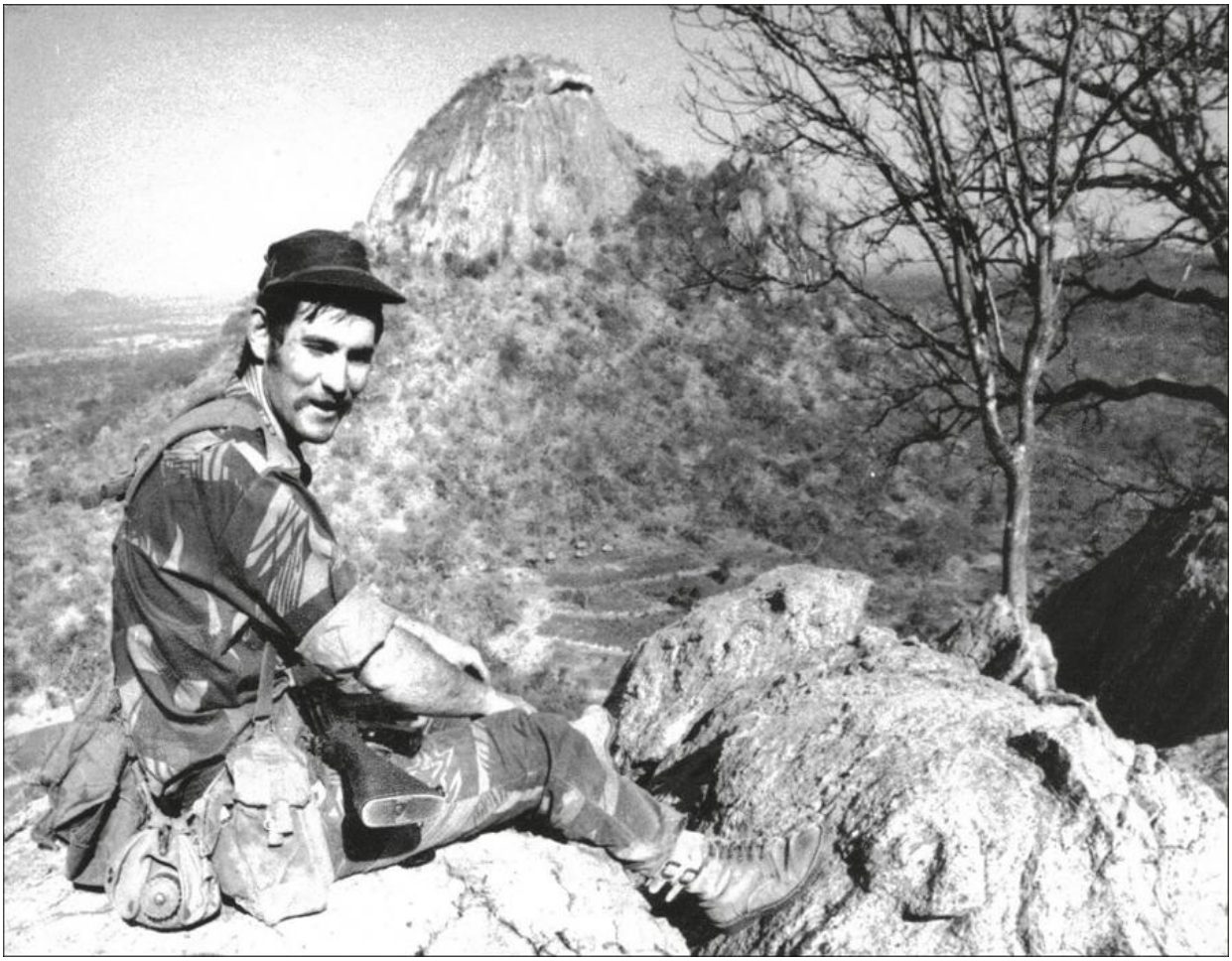
OP commander: “Keep coming straight, keep coming straight, go right, keep going right.”

Pilot: “Roger.”

OP commander: “Roll out, straighten out, keep coming.”

A good pilot would immediately adjust and set his bearings according to your instructions. There was no need to use smoke; unless you were in really thick bush you could get an aircraft directly overhead without the use of smoke and with the minimum amount of talking as quickly as possible so as not to lose the element of surprise and so that the contact could be initiated.

An OP in the Zambezi valley.



A Rhodesia Regiment soldier on OP duty in the Madziwa TTL. Photo Gordon Campbell

Landmarks were commonly used in talk-ons, especially when the K-Car was out of earshot but had initiated radio comms. For example, the OP commander would say, “When you are about three kilometres out you will pass over a group of five huts of which one is particularly large. To the northeast of these huts is a very dense cluster of trees.”

The K-Car commander would confirm receipt of the information and ask the ground stick leader to stand by. Once the pilot and commander had the huts visual they would communicate this to the OP leader. It would not take the helicopter long to overfly this feature and the OP commander would then wait until he could hear the K-Car and would communicate this, then he would communicate that he had the K-Car visual and then, if he was good, he would very quickly, because the helicopters were approaching rapidly, rattle off feature after feature that the pilot would encounter. For example, “You will now see a dry riverbed, then a line of six small huts, and then sparse scrub bush; behind that is the hill on which we are situated.” The pilot would confirm each feature as he overflew it and then communicate that he had the OP visual.

From that point the K-Car commander would take control and the OP’s role would become limited. They would probably spread out on their hill feature to get as composite a view of the surrounding terrain as possible in order to feed relevant information to the airborne army commander, such as a fleeing enemy insurgent that the K-Car commander might not be aware of. By then the entire Fire Force would have arrived and the OP would either remain clandestine or, in some cases, be called to join the fray if extra ground troops were needed.

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CHAPTER SEVEN:

FIREFIGHT

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Assuming the K-Car was quickly and effectively directed over the target, the enemy would then usually break. The terrain would determine the direction in which they would run. If it was a hilly feature they would move down into the ravines, if it was a treeline they would use the cover of the trees and if it was a riverline they could move either up or down the river, at all times retaining the use of cover.

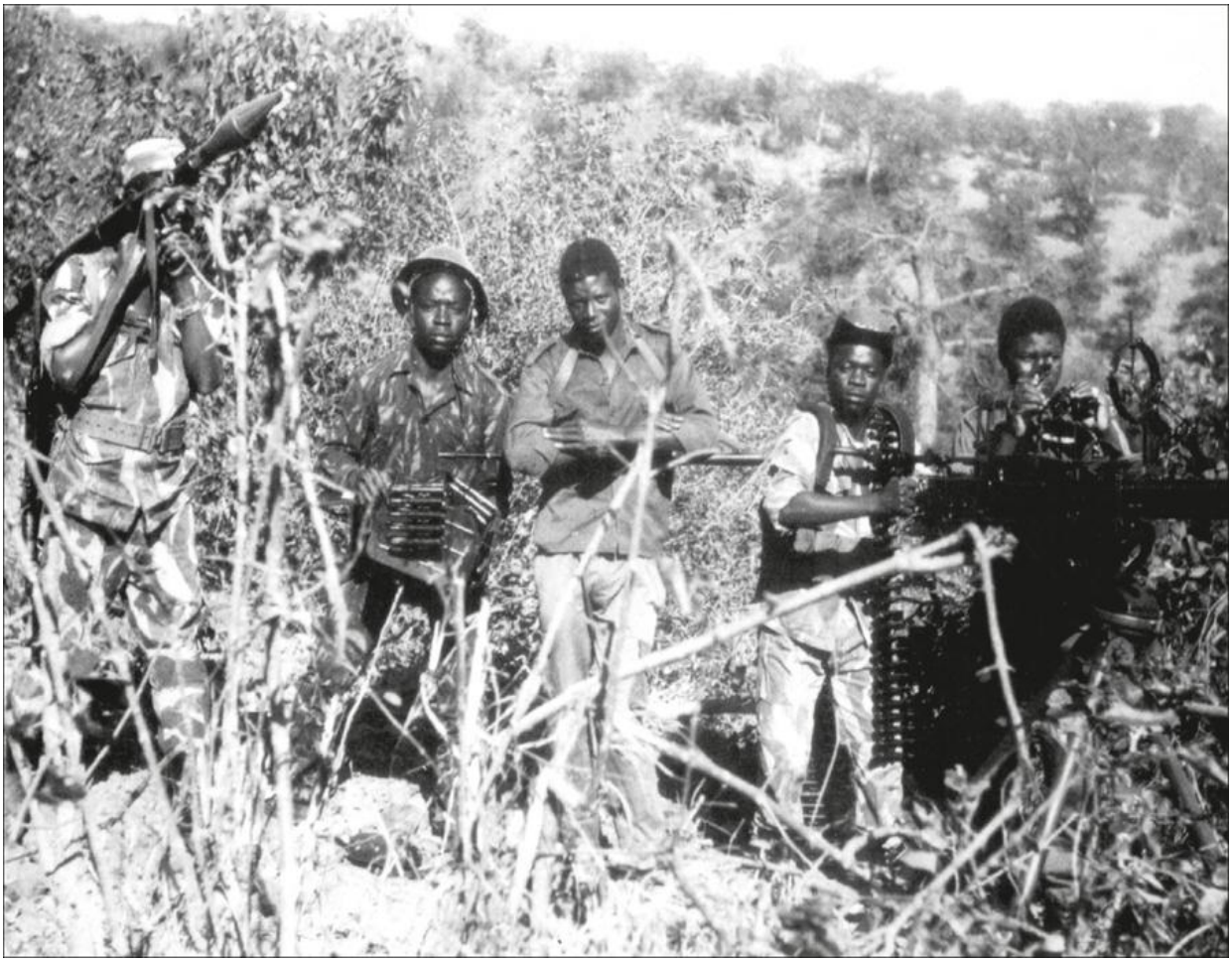
It was at this point that the contact would be initiated and from the perspective of the K-Car the marksmanship of its gunner-technician—restricted to three 20mm rounds per target. In fact the accuracy of the gunner was so important that, because one round cost 35 Rhodesian dollars each (some US$25), the armourer would count the number of spent shells after a contact and if it was deemed that ammunition had been wasted or that too many rounds had been used with too few ‘kills’ the gunner-technician would be sent for reclassification.

After the initial contact by the K-Car with the 20mm, all hell would break loose. The radio talk might become excessive as everyone tried to get a word in and it is here again that a number of variables come into play. The pilot and gunner-technician in the K-Car would try to limit their radio chat to give the army commander the airtime he needed to conduct the battle—or should the need arise use another frequency for the aerial aspect of helicopter positioning. It was a given that the gunner-technician would engage any targets of opportunity with the

20mm unless for some reason he felt it necessary to discuss it with the pilot first.

An RAR stop group in position.

An RAR sweepline moves forward.



A group of ZANLA insurgents.

An RAR MAG gunner.

If the commander believed that the enemy numbers were large enough to tip the battle odds in their favour, or at least significantly increase the Rhodesian army odds, the K-Car would widen its orbit and call the Lynx forward to put in an airstrike to ‘soften up’ the target area. The Lynx would be armed with frantan (Rhodesian euphemism for napalm), white phosphorus, SNEB rockets and 30mm cannons. The Lynx pilot would strafe the target area while coming in for his bombing run.

The K-Car commander would be preparing to control his sticks on the ground and taking note of the prominent geographical features and, with the pilot, deciding where to drop the sticks. Three sticks, Stops 1, 2 and 3 were available to him. As soon as the Fire Force commander had made his snap visual assessment of the situation, the terrain and enemy movements, he would instruct the G-Cars to position their Stop Groups as close to the main enemy group as possible, to either sweep rapidly toward the enemy position, or act as Stop Groups in likely ravines and gullies to prevent the enemy from escaping.

First prize was a pre-arranged drop. This would have been decided at the briefing where the commander would have anticipated two variables playing out on contact and would have—to facilitate speed and thus success—established a Plan Alpha and Plan Bravo for the two possible scenarios he foresaw. Thus if one of these scenarios was indeed manifesting itself once over the target area the commander would simply call “Plan Alpha” or “Plan Bravo” and the G-Cars would know exactly where to drop their sticks and do so immediately. They would then head back into orbit awaiting further instructions from the K-Car.

Around this time the limited range of the Alouette would come into play. The K-Car had around an hour and a half flying time and the G-Car probably 15 or so minutes less than that. It is likely then that the G-Cars would be instructed to head for an elevated hill feature and wait there or head directly back to the Landtail for refuelling.

A stick was a four-man military sub-unit (as in any army that may refer to its sub-units as sections, platoons or companies). Stick was just the Rhodesian terminology for this initially five- and then four-man military sub-unit determined by the lift capability of the Alouette.

The standard Fire Force stick comprised three riflemen, one being the stick leader, and an MAG machine-gunner. The stick leader varied in rank from senior trooper up to lieutenant and was the key

communication link with the overall commander in the K-Car and the men in his stick.

A rifleman was armed with the standard NATO 7.62mm FN rifle, carrying between ten and 12 20-round magazines, that is, 200 to 240 rounds. Some FN riflemen had the luxury of 30-round magazines and a few even 40-round magazines. A common trick was for riflemen to tape two 20-round magazines upside down for easy change-over. Each rifleman, except the stick leader, would also carry at least one extra 50-round belt for the MAG gunner.

The riflemen's responsibilities within the stick were simply accurate shooting, i.e. killing. This was not necessarily always simple. Riflemen had to be able to put one out of two rounds into a target at four to five metres, and they did, becoming masters at snap-shooting or the signature double-tap over open sights. (Most Fire Force firefights took place at a few metres and in many cases at point-blank range.) Other than that their responsibilities were very limited; they would carry a variety of rifle and hand grenades—M962 fragmentation, white phosphorus and coloured smoke grenades as well as an Icarus parachute flare and usually a one-kilogram bunker bomb for cave-clearing operations. Handguns were optional, but always carried by the paras. These would be 9mm FN or Star pistols, or a variety of non-standard-issue weapons such as Communist Tokarevs and Makarovs. Some even carried personal .45 revolvers.

An RLI stick is uplifted by G-car for repositioning.

A rifleman might be the first to detect the enemy position and open fire; the number of rounds fired would be restricted at which time the machine-gunner would very quickly bring his weapon to bear and lay down as much fire as possible.

The machine-gunner carried the 7.62mm MAG machine gun, slung with bipods folded. He would normally have a 100-round belt loaded in the gun, with a further eight to ten 50-round belts in his webbing pouches or slung over his shoulders and across his chest. In all he

would have well over 600 rounds available to him, including the two extra belts carried by the riflemen.

The machine-gunner was the stick's major fire power and thus crucial to the stick. It was the gunner's job to bring down maximum possible weight of fire as quickly as possible onto the enemy once his position had been located. A good gunner would thus give his commander the breathing space to figure out what was going on so that he could then direct the other two men, or more in the case of Sweeplines, in which direction they should advance using fire and movement.

The stick leader would carry the A63 and latterly the A76 radio, maps where necessary, mini-binoculars, pencil flares, his notebook with radio codes, frequencies and call signs, a compass and vials of morphine. Time permitting, he would have joined the briefing in the operations room back at the Fire Force base and have a general idea of the situation.

Each stick member would also carry a lightweight waterproof sleeping bag, enough rations and water for at least 24 hours, i.e. a minimum of two water bottles, spare radio batteries and an orange Day-Glo for aerial identification (usually sewn inside his headgear). One rifleman would carry the basic stick medic's pack. One rifleman also carried a panga, or machete, and a length of rope or para cord. The heliborne stick leader of Stop One would be the first ground leader on the scene.

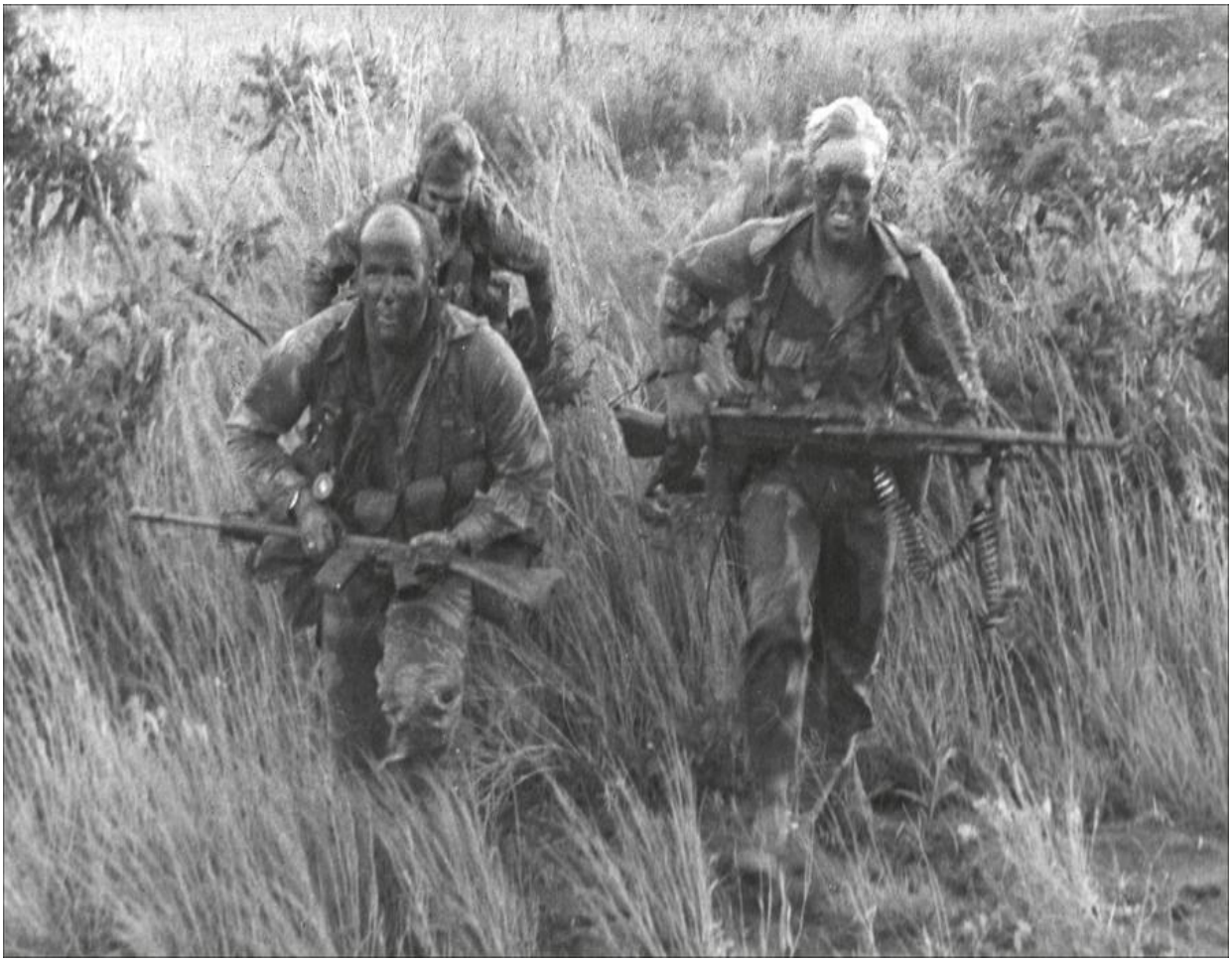
The training of soldiers was an ongoing process and at any one time there would be one or two members from a troop or platoon away on some course or other and invariably a four-man stick would consist of a trained troop medic—who would have attended a month-long medic's course—who might double as the MAG gunner, someone who had been on a demolitions course and someone trained in signals, especially Morse code. There would be one stick member who had perhaps been on a tracking course. The name of the game was to get your four-man stick trained in as many disciplines and skills as

possible, effectively designed to give the stick autonomy and flexibility when it was operating on its own in the bush.

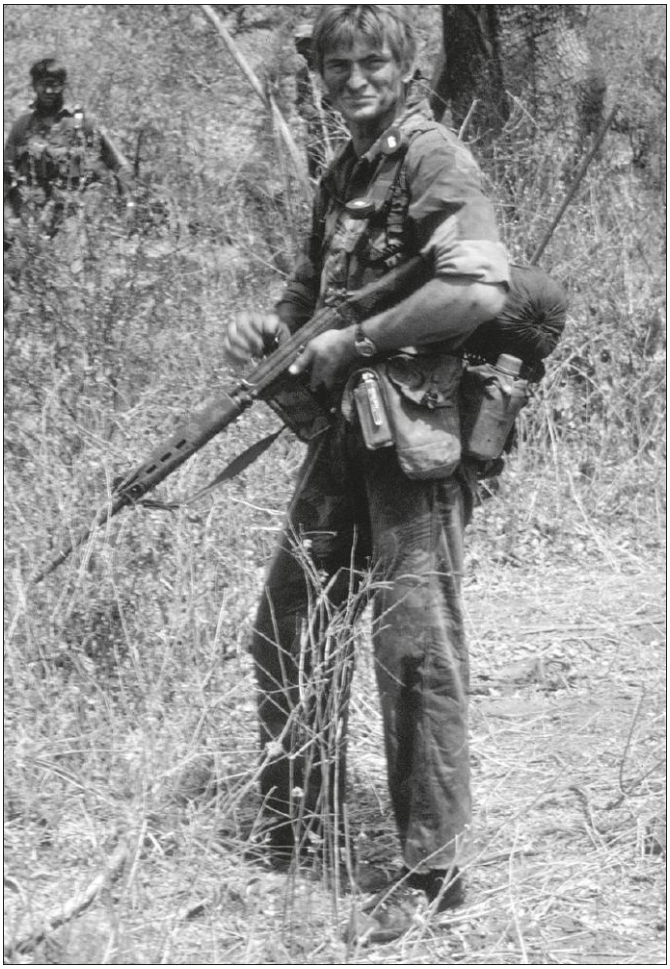
With 50 ZANLA insurgents based up in the foothills of the Mutambara mountains, with deadly 20mm rounds blasting the granite rock into lethal shrapnel and the enemy cowed by two Lynx airstrikes, it is now up to the three sticks on the ground and the K-Car gunner-technician to contain the bombshelling gang members. Twelve men is all the K-Car commander has available to him in the opening minutes, sometimes up to 15 minutes, of the contact.

The three ground sticks will now either sweep toward the enemy, making contact, or stay put in an ambush (Stop) position or hook up with another stick, depending on the circumstances.

In our 1978 contact … the K-Car commander has directed his G-Cars to drop Stops 1, 2 and 3 north of the kraal line at the base of the mountain's northwest face, below the riverline and farther up a smaller riverline in a deep ravine south of the mountain and the kraal line respectively …



An RLI Fire Force stick rushes to an awaiting G-Car for uplift.



An RLI Fire Force stick leader.

A 3 Commando 1RLI trooper with an FN and a thousand-yard stare.

The above takes place within a matter of a few mad minutes during which time the Dakota is now circling above. The K-Car commander will have decided whether to use his paratroops or not. If indeed he makes use of them, which was more often than not the case, he will drop them either as a single ground force or in batches of eight or 12 men each in order to box in the enemy. This may sound straightforward but in most cases the paras did not deploy and land in perfect formation; they dropped haphazardly in dense bush and had to first extract themselves and their parachutes from whatever terrain they encountered, then find the rest of their stick and then form up.

They could then, depending on their proximity to the contact area and the enemy, sweep directly from their form-op point or might need to be moved and re-positioned by G-Car, either as individual Stop Groups or as a constituent of a larger Sweepline.

Again, para drops were not always seamless. Nigel Henson, a renowned K-Car commander from Support Commando RLI, recalls an incident where eleven out of his 20 paras were injured in a drop over rising ground. Broken bones and sprains put them out of the contact, leaving him severely short of troops; some had been dropped as low as 150 feet, their parachutes barely having time to open.

This necessitated a Fire Force commander to quickly rethink his strategy. He may, for example, bring in other call signs from the area, such as PATU and TF sticks at nearby bases. Should this be necessary, because these other call signs were not as well versed in the Fire Force procedure, the commander would generally utilize them in the Stop positions and reposition his Fire Force sticks in the Sweepline.

As an aside: in smaller contacts the commander might decide not to use his paratroops, using the G-Car sticks to make contact with the enemy first and then ascertain whether a further saturation of the area was in fact necessary. Dispatching paratroops was a costly and time-consuming exercise. Getting and keeping the Dakota in the air was expensive and unnecessarily dropping paratroops tired them out and placed them under needless stress; plus the collection, returning and repacking of the parachutes was also a very time-consuming exercise. There was the risk too that should another Fire Force action be mobilized in the same operational area, the paratroops might not be available for that contact.

In the meantime the G-Cars would immediately have returned to the temporary base or Landtail to collect the second wave of troops. Here they would also refuel and rearm and then return to the contact area.

The Fire Force commander is thus saturating the area with as many troops as he has available to him and boxing off the enemy with his Sweeplines and Stop Groups. The Landtail might carry as many as six sticks plus support personel; however, some, at least half a dozen, would remain behind to guard the Landtail, and to deal with casevacs and refuel the helicopters.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

SWEEPLINES AND STOP GROUPS

The simple difference between a Sweepline and a Stop Group is that the former is mobile and the latter is static. A Stop Group in a Fire Force scenario generally only comprised one stick, though sometimes more. A Sweepline could comprise one Stop Group sweeping forward or, more generally, several. In very broad terms, the first wave, i.e. Stops 1, 2 and 3, was used as Stop Groups and the paratroops as a ready-made Sweepline of 16 to 20 men, with the second wave of Stops 4, 5 and 6 adopting either a Sweepline or Stop Group role, or a combination thereof. Stops Groups could morph into Sweeplines and Sweeplines could be broken down into Stop Groups. The permutations were endless and are probably very confusing to the reader—only the men in the K-Car really knew what was happening on the ground.

Once on the ground, troops were under the direct command of their stick leader. So let's for a moment look at the fairly weighty responsibilities that these young men—some only 18—bore. As leader of a stick of four men his duties were somewhat limited; in this case he would be responsible first to the other three men and then to himself. If the stick leader was in charge of a Sweepline or an extended stop group—that was spread out and acting independently—then his responsibilities were far weightier. In the early days a senior NCO or officer would assume the role of stick leader in the above two instances. However, as the war wore on and manpower became a

huge problem, it was not uncommon for these responsibilities to fall to a corporal, a lance-corporal or even a senior trooper.

Sweeplines were responsible for locating and neutralizing enemy positions. The commander of a Sweepline was the link between the gunship or K-Car commander and the action that was taking place on the ground; he would be positioned in the centre of the Sweepline.

Key to any Fire Force operation was communication, so when you had a stick commander on the ground in charge of an entire Sweepline he had to be very aware of what it was that the K-Car commander expected of his Sweepline. A lot of his attention—aside from ensuring the survival of the men on his immediate left and right, as well as his own—was concentrated on the radio handset placed on his left shoulder if right-handed (as he carried his rifle at the ready in his right shoulder—if right-handed). The chat may not have been directed at him specifically but he would need to be aware of what was being discussed in order to have a mental picture of the battlefield. Generally he would have no more than two sticks to his left and two to his right. He would need to be aware of the terrain he was moving through and of the dressing (the alignment) and spacing of his men. From there the stick leader could confidently leave the locating of the enemy to his men.

(Interestingly, Alan Thrush makes the comment on communication within the RAR—who were all African troopers, including their stick leaders and junior NCOs and who generally spoke good English—that under combat stress their English could break down. The K-Car commander would always be white. As a result senior RAR NCOs and subalterns would always accompany their RAR troops into Fire Force actions. This placed an inordinate amount of strain on them. Because there were generally three Fire Force waves, RLI troops could rotate: first-wave sticks would fall into third-wave position after a contact (or after a week, for example) and the second wave would move forward to first wave and so on. But because of the language issue, senior

RAR NCOs and subalterns went into every single contact with their troops.)

RAR soldiers cross a stream to shake out into extended line in order to sweep toward the contact area.

Once the troops were on the ground, the task of positioning and repositioning troops, either as Sweeplines or Stop Groups, in order to best contain and eliminate the enemy would start. From their aerial vantage point at 800 feet the K-Car commander and the K-Car pilot could see the contact unfolding.

Once fire had been exchanged on location of the enemy by the initial Sweepline and the paratroops had been dispatched, or indeed while the paratroops were in the process of being dispatched, the K-Car commander would begin repositioning ground troops, whether they were from the initial G-Car sticks or the paratroops, as Stop Groups, either as a line behind the Sweepline or as dictated by the terrain and the K-Car commander's assessment of possible escape routes.

Sweeplines and Stop Groups would be directed up or down features and once a Sweepline had moved through the contact area it would turn around and re-sweep back, this time more methodically. Often more contacts would take place during the resweep than during the initial sweep due to the pace at which everything happened at the start of the contact.

All the while, the K-Car gunner (and indeed the G-Car gunners) would be engaging targets of opportunity and the Lynx would be putting in sporadic airstrikes as directed by the K-Car commander.

Paratroops in the RAR and RLI came about as a result of the need to get more troops into the contact area more quickly as the number of available helicopters was very limited. The significance of the Para Dakota and its paratroopers in the Fire Force role necessitates a more in-depth look at both.

At the break-up of Federation Southern Rhodesia received eight Dakota C-47s of Second-World-War vintage. No. 3 Squadron was home to the Dakotas at New Sarum in Salisbury. As old as they were they would form the backbone of the Fire Force as it would play out in the later 1970s.

Operation Sunrise, or the Nyasaland Emergency as it is more commonly known, saw the formation of C Squadron SAS—this gave the Federation an elite unit of paratroopers.

The first deployment from a Para Dakota was by the SAS from Buffalo Range and took place on 22 September 1976. At this early stage the commander of the para stick sat number one on the port side but it was quickly realized that this was in fact incorrect as he would then land first and find himself way out on the extremity of an extended Sweepline. The correct place in the Para Dakota for the commander was in fact number one on the starboard side: that way he would land in the middle with his men extending equally to his left and right.

Another advantage of this seating position was that he was able to look out the door and see the topography, an amount of the action on the ground and, not insignificantly, avoid being sick like the troops farther forward down the fuselage of the Dakota, which happened fairly often, depending on how long the Dakota circled the contact before being called upon by the Fire Force commander (it could at times be airborne, circling in turbulent heat, for two hours or more).

RAR troops advancing through thick bush.

A Dakota running in to the DZ.

Because the SAS was quickly and almost exclusively deployed externally, their temporary Fire Force role was handed over to the RLI and RAR who, according to Major Grahame Wilson, became very proficient at it. This did however mean that for a few months the Rhodesians had lost their in-country paratroop capability.

Coupled with this the South Africans withdrew 27 SAAF helicopters and pilots in 1976 due to political wrangling and pressures, leaving the Rhodesians massively restricted in terms of how many sticks a

commander had available to him for a call-out, dictated by the limited number of Rhodesian G-Cars.

The answer to this was to para-train the infantry, the RLI and RAR troops. 1 Commando's (RLI) static-line course at New Sarum in November 1976 precipitated the para-training of the entire RLI battalion in 1977, thereby initiating the much-expanded capability of battle deployment. With the shortage of helicopters this was the only way to rapidly deploy the maximum amount of troops into a Fire Force action.

The RLI para-training programme began in earnest in January 1977 and each commando sent troops to New Sarum for training. However, facilities were inadequate to cope with the numbers and so the SADF Parachute Regiment at Tempe Base in Bloemfontein, South Africa, stepped in to help. The RLI never really considered itself an airborne unit proper, although it holds the world record for operational jumps. (It was not uncommon for a paratrooper to jump into a firefight twice or even thrice in one day.)

The RAR soon followed suit in mid-1977 and by October 1977, B Company 1RAR had its wings. This happened over a period of time as platoon-sized units from different companies were called up for training—and by the end of 1978 more than half the men of 1RAR and 2RAR were para-trained. (3RAR was never para-trained simply because it was formed so late in the war.) An educated estimate puts between 50 and 70 per cent of 1RAR and 2 RAR as para-trained by the end of 1978.

The predominant role and responsibilities of an RAR company would determine whether or not they would be para-trained; not all were, but those that partook in Fire Force duties certainly were. All RAR para-training (basic static line course) was undertaken at New Sarum AFB by the same instructors who trained the RLI, SAS and Selous Scouts. The actual training lasted about three weeks with eight jumps including one night jump. The RAR did not attend the courses in South Africa, although black Selous Scouts did.

Dakotas were pulled out of their revetments at first light at the various Fire Force bases around the country. In order to maintain the base's state of readiness, dispatchers and technicians would have the Dakota fuelled up and checked and the parachutes lined up outside the door, under the port wing or in a nearby para hut or tent.

RLI paras drop into a DZ. With no wind and an open, obstacle-free DZ, it appears a straightforward jump. Photo Giles Gillespie

At the time the Fire Force is activated and the siren sounds the three RLI and two RAR para sticks of our contact will immediately go to the

Para Dakota and get kitted up with the help of the dispatchers. These five sticks, or 20 men, will form the Sweepline necessary to the K-Car commander in the contact.

The Dakota pilot and his co-pilot will be at the JOC briefing.

Toward the end of 1977 the air force was desperately short of dispatchers and infantrymen could volunteer to go on a dispatcher's course. In the text below the procedures and events within the Para Dakota are closely examined to give the reader an idea of what was happening in that circling Dakota before, during and after it has been called upon by the K-Car commander.

When the airborne commander called for the paratroopers to be dropped he would give instructions to the Dakota pilot who would proceed toward the designated drop zone that the commander would have identified. The Dakota pilot would drop to 500 feet above ground level and when half a minute out from the DZ the pilot would give instructions to the air force (the senior) dispatcher who would be standing on the starboard side facing the door wearing a headset.

He would give the instruction to the troops to "Stand up, hook up, check equipment". Invariably the noise from the aircraft would drown out his words and he would use a simple set of hand signals to convey this instruction.

Once he had raised his hands the troops would stand. Two cables ran overhead. The port-side troops would hook up to the cable closest to them and the starboard stick would hook up to the starboard side cable.

Each paratrooper would then be responsible for checking the back of the man in front of him and his equipment. The assistant or number two dispatcher, who would be standing or sitting just inside the door on the port side, would, with difficulty, weave his way through the mass of bodies and equipment to the front of the aircraft, conducting his own check. He would then retake his position at the back by the

door, pressing himself up against the side of the aircraft to allow the port stick, which jumped first, space to pass. The senior dispatcher would remain in place and the number one assistant dispatcher would be standing on the other side of the open door, closer to the back of the aircraft.

The number one man in the port side stick shuffles toward the door and as the red light above the door comes on, he receives the instruction to “Stand in the door”. To steady himself his legs will be spread apart—his right foot in the door and his left back and to the side. He will hold onto the frame of the door with his left hand and place his right hand across his reserve parachute on his chest, ready to jump.

When the green light comes on the number one dispatcher whacks him on his rear end: “Go!” From there the rest of the paratroopers bear down on the dispatchers and make all haste to get out the door as quickly as possible.

The reason for the two dispatchers, one on either side of the door, is so that if anyone hesitates or freezes in the door he can be forcibly bundled out, normally with a couple of karate chops to unlock his arms from the door frame and then a solid boot up the backside.

The aim was to get 16 to 20 paratroopers out the door at a rate of two men per second, clearing the aircraft in some ten seconds or so.

Once everyone was out, a dispatcher would glance out the door to ensure no one was hooked up on the tail plane. This was a very real possibility due to the sheer volume and speed at which the troops were dispatched. Static lines could become crossed and the backdraft could also entangle lines. In such a case the dispatcher would have to cut the paratrooper’s static line manually and the paratrooper would then need to rely on his reserve and God.

The heavy work for the three dispatchers would now start, as 20 heavy static lines would be dragging out the door in the slipstream and

would need to be heaved back into the aircraft. As the Dakota returned to base, the dispatchers would busy themselves laying the static lines out and packing them up to start again. (In addition to this Fire Force duty, occasionally assistant dispatchers would be responsible for supply drops to SAS troops operating outside the country. This could be dangerous work as the Dakota would invariably be picked up on enemy radar and attract small-arms and sometimes heavy anti-aircraft fire.)

The paratroop drop was often chaotic because of being dropped in trees or among rocks, or both. As a result there were almost always casualties on the para drop—mostly badly sprained ankles but occasionally broken bones too; and of course the challenges of paratroopers being shot at in the air by guerrillas below them. Thus dropping paratroopers accurately as a constituted Sweepline seldom happened. It is also important to differentiate between internal and external operations. Because externals were so well planned, in advance, paratroopers were always dropped, generally, in pre-arranged positions as a Sweepline or a 16- or 20-man Stop Group. But in Rhodesia on a typical Fire Force call-out it was random, it was unpredictable and spur of the moment. Planning was a luxury the day-to-day Fire Force did not have and as a result para drops were often haphazard: if paratroops were accurately dropped as a ready-made Sweepline it was almost certainly a matter of coincidence.

Stepping back to the Fire Force base for a moment; from a platoon or stick commander's perspective a Fire Force action began with the end of the previous one. As soon as the troops returned to base the CSM would make sure everyone was immediately replenished with the ammunition and grenades that had been expended during the previous contact. The mood was then relaxed until word came from the operations tent that another call-out was imminent.

Stick commanders would cluster around the army commander who would provide a very brief, no more than a minute, idea of where you

were going and how many you were up against, more than that they really did not need to know.

Flying into the combat area, the stick commander wearing a headset in the G-Car—in the Dakota the troops would have little information available to them—would start to pick up the radio communication coming from the OP that had called in the Fire Force. Once this chit-chat started the stick leader would know that the time for action was fast approaching, that they would have roughly ten to 15 minutes before deployment.

Then it was five and four, three, two, one and then you were in.

It is oft agreed that from the time the troops were on the ground the fear would evaporate, that although there was a sense of fear while airborne, once on the ground that would dissipate. The stick leader would immediately establish comms with the K-Car commander who would direct him toward the enemy position. Remember, the primary role of the first troops on the ground was to sweep the area, locate the enemy and engage them before they had an opportunity to flee; or, in prepositioned locations (Stop Groups), prevent the enemy from escaping.

The Fire Force contact and sweep of the enemy positions would vacillate between short bursts of high-intensity combat and confusion where fire was exchanged at close range and backbreaking drudgery sweeping through dense bush and over rocky riverbeds. From a stick leader's point of view, on the ground, along the width of his Sweepline, a Fire Force operation could be seven or eight hours of very intense physical work, in hot conditions under the weight of heavy equipment —the gunner suffering under the enormous weight of the MAG—with the constant tension that the unpredictability of a flash firefight carried. The enemy was never far away, so the seven-odd hours were interspersed with up to several periods of combat, each lasting between a few seconds and possibly ten to 15 minutes, plus the occasional airstrike and then the post-operation clean-up.

Each member of a stick had his responsibilities but the first few minutes on the ground were anyone's game. Alan Thrush describes it thus: "At times there would just be the crash of machine-gun fire, neither the stick commander nor any of the riflemen would even have seen the enemy; they would bring their rifles to bear in the direction the MAG gunner was firing, where the dust was flying. At other times it would be a rifleman who would be the first to spot the enemy and initiate the contact."

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CHAPTER NINE:

CASUALTIES AND CAPTURES

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With a battle of this magnitude raging and entering its eighth hour, casualties and captures are inevitable. These are immediately evacuated by G-Car to the temporary base. The casualties are referred to the commando medic and the captures to the Special Branch member who has travelled from Chipinga for the purpose of taking him, or them, into custody for further questioning.

The transportation and treating of casualties include any civilians caught in the crossfire and any ZANLA cadres. All receive identical and non-preferential treatment by all medical staff, by the commando medic at Nyanyadzi and at the hospital.

There were quite a few troops in the Fire Force sticks who had no formal medical training other than the brief first-aid course conducted during their training; their expertise was learned from hands-on experience in the field. If a stick had no medic in its ranks, one member of the stick would have had the medic's pack thrust at him when the sticks were being made up and would probably spend the rest of the contact praying that no one got hurt. If men were wounded things could go either way depending on who had the medic's pack and how often he had carried it into a firefight; in other words, his field experience.

A hair-raising contact like this could easily, and did, encourage troops to get themselves adequately trained. First up was a basic Stick

Medic's course, a five-day training course that focused on the basics and most likely wounds one would encounter and how to deal with them: airways, bleeding, breathing, chest wounds, drips, drugs, dressings and evacuations. The next rung up was a one-month-long Troop Medic's course conducted by the Rhodesian Army Medical Corps at Llewellin barracks in Bulawayo. Thereafter, stick or troop medics could be selected for a three-month MA3 course which would, at the end of it, position him as the commando or company medic. On the MA3 course much training took place in the casualty departments of large government hospitals dealing with everything from sutures to stab and gunshot wounds. A heavy responsibility rested on the commando medics; they did, fortunately, always have radio communications with the regimental doctor.

A wounded guerrilla is stretchered into a G-Gar.

A wounded civilian caught in crossfire is loaded into a fixed-wing aircraft, probably a Trojan.

In a Fire Force role the medics were obviously responsible for taking care of the wounded, but equally as important, although not as glamorous was taking charge of camp hygiene, making sure troops took their malaria medication and keeping tabs on the morphine. These may seem trivial when compared with an AK-47 gunshot wound, but an outbreak of typhoid, for example, in a poorly sanitized

Fire Force base could cripple the base and the strike arm of the regional JOC.

If a man was wounded during a contact the stick medic would administer basic first aid. The commando medic would be stationed in the Para Dakota should he be needed at the scene in a life or death situation, one which the stick medic could not be expected to resolve. This did happen but it was infrequent. In most cases the wounded man would be moved back to a safer location, stabilized by the stick medic and then casevaced out to base or where the Dakota would have landed, the medic deplaned and ready to take responsibility. As the war progressed so did the development of drugs and medical aids, for example inflatable splints.

The commando medic would then provide secondary help, the priorities being to stop any bleeding and get a drip in to supply fluids.

Mobile surgical units (MSUs) came into being in late 1978 / early 1979 and were used at forward administration bases during operations, both internal and external. These would have a doctor, an MA2 and two MA3s to assist. The MSUs were fully equipped for anaesthetizing and surgery. The MSU was a Mercedes 2.5 Unimog vehicle with a large caravan attached to it that was the operating theatre. Inside was a totally sterile unit. To the left and right of the caravan clip-on tents could be erected that could hold six beds on either side. Theoretically, they could handle 12 or 13 patients at any given time.

The MSU was a major morale booster, for even though the troops might know that there was an external coming up or a major operation underway because of the MSU's presence, it calmed them to know that 'the Doc' was on hand. Often the wounded were treated with such expertise that they would only need to be flown out the following day to one of the major hospitals.

The inside of an MSU, a Mobile Surgical Unit. Photo Tom Argyle

One of the biggest problems was dehydration and on occasion the medic would need to do a ‘cut down’ to find a vein to quickly get in fluids. This did on more than one occasion save soldiers’ lives, though there are several examples of deaths from dehydration.

Rhodesian medics worked tirelessly, not only on their own troops but with civilians who had been caught in the crossfire (a very common occurrence). If at all possible they were treated and casevaced to hospitals.

A commando medic's role during a typical Fire Force operation would also start at the wailing of the siren. The medic might go out with the second wave or be held back until needed, when he would then either wait for the stabilized trooper to be brought back by helicopter or, in cases or emergency, accompany the casevac helicopter to administer in-flight treatment.

During external operations things changed dramatically. The medics would parachute into the operational areas with the troops; they might be fully operational, being shot at themselves.

Medics tended to see their role less within the sphere of the Fire Force and far more within the scope of saving lives, whether friend or foe.

Regarding casevacs, if one of the Rhodesian troops was hit the G-Car would go right into the contact area, no matter how 'hot', to get the wounded out as quickly as possible. A stretcher was kept under the gunner-technician's bench, who would open up the stretcher and run into the contact and assist the troopers in getting the casevac into the aircraft. In some cases the incoming fire or firefights in and around the LZ were so intense there was no time for a stretcher and the gunner-technician and the stick medic would manhandle the wounded soldier onto a poncho or sleeping bag and unceremoniously manoeuvre him onto the bench or the floor of the helicopter so that the pilot could immediately get airborne.

The Special Branch officer standing by knew that the question of further intelligence was paramount. The best available intelligence had to be fed to the troops on the ground. Ground troops' live were at risk and the intelligence services were at pains to supply information that was accurate and, more importantly, current. As a result, intelligence officers would, as a matter of course, be attached to all JOCs and sub-JOCs.

The outside of an MSU. Photo Tom Argyle

From an intelligence point of view there were two aspects in particular that had to be considered with the interviewing of captured personnel. Firstly, what could that capture offer in a follow-on of the engagement in which he had been captured—short-term information—that could lead to an immediate follow-up on the ground in an effort to capture the rest of his group? This was a priority.

Noteworthy here is that captures could be ‘turned’, some within hours, others overnight, against their comrades and might be convinced to

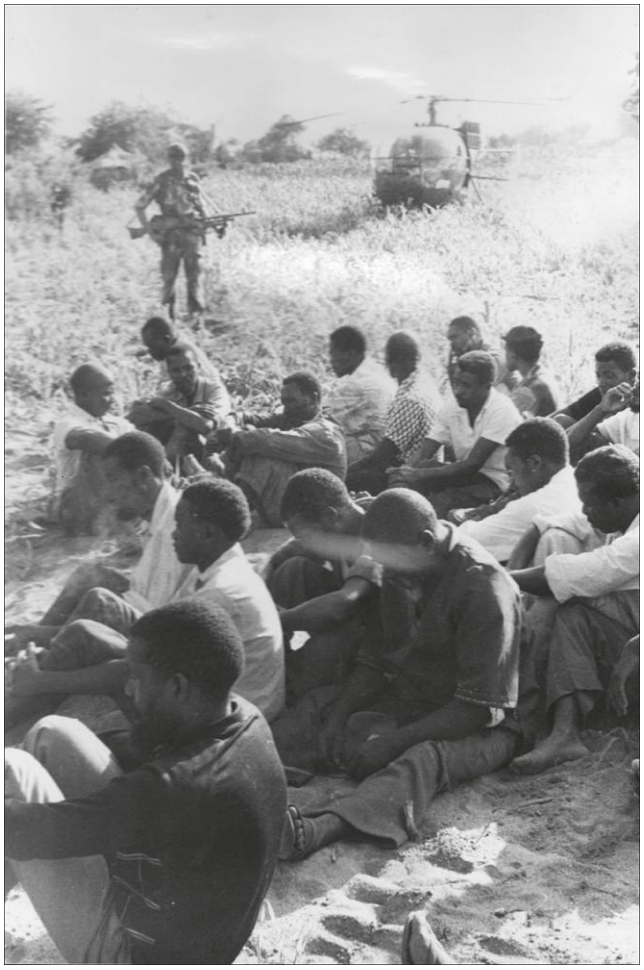
join a Selous Scout call sign in the follow-up operation of capturing the rest of the group.

Tenacity and stamina were vital in the obtaining of information during an interview. Of paramount importance was the accuracy of that information and thus, according to a member of Special Branch, physical force was of no use because one could not trust the information gained through torture.

As regards obtaining information in the field from captured insurgents, it is important to bear in mind that the capture would invariably be in a high state of shock and / or wounded. Interviewers had to be very careful when it came to the questioning of a capture. The first objective would be to ensure that his wounds were treated. It then became the task of a highly experienced interrogator to distinguish between the information being given by the capture; some of it would be reliable but remember he would say anything in that moment, believing his life was in very real danger. So where in his beseeching outpouring is that single morsel of accurate, real-time information that can be used immediately by the Fire Force commander in a prompt follow-up? That's why Special Branch specialists were in the field and an integral part of the JOC: they knew how to alleviate that shock, calm him down and help him realize that his life was definitely not in danger. They knew how to achieve this in the short term for the quick Fire Force reaction and in the longer term for more detailed information.

As an aside, it may strike one as somewhat incomprehensible that enemy troops could, in relatively large numbers, be 'turned' and brought across to the Rhodesian side and incorporated into Rhodesian military units, the Selous Scouts in particular. It may seem incongruous that a staunch nationalist, fighting for his country's freedom, could change or leave his ideology behind in a fairly short space of time.

Captured ZANLA weapons.



Rounded up after a Fire Force action, a group of prisoners, guarded by an RLI machine-gunner, awaits questioning by Special Branch who will quickly determine who is civilian and who is insurgent.

It was in fact the ZANLA high command who made this a comparatively simple task for the Rhodesians. They put the fear of God into their recruits as to what would happen to them if they were captured. On infiltrating Rhodesia, the enemy troops were already in a state of trepidation, so once captured that trepidation turned to pure terror; they expected to the tortured and executed. So when they were captured and were treated rationally, even kindly, and had their wounds attended to by a qualified medic, they may have been

sceptical at first but when this treatment continued they would begin to trust, and considering that conditions in the external ZANLA camps were brutally dire, what the Rhodesians were offering was comparable paradise. This, coupled with a growing mistrust of their training—the Fire Force had decimated them—made ‘turning’ them less difficult than one would imagine.

In the Selous Scouts their ‘turned’ insurgents were treated decently and eventually became an integral part of the unit.

Imagine standing on the parade ground of a large camp, such as the one in Chimoio in Mozambique (the 1977 Operation Dingo) and a Canberra flies overhead and drops a 1,000-pound bomb on you, closely followed by a Hawker Hunter firing at you, followed by the staccato firing of the 20mm cannon of the K-Car spraying deadly shrapnel in all directions, whipping up dust and debris, and then being assaulted by aggressive ground troops. Anyone captured under such circumstances will, without doubt, be in a state of extreme shock. As a result the long-term interview took time and occurred later; it would be too much for the capture to recall older events and details, such as camp numbers, in that current state of mind. This second part of the interview dealt with long-term information: the date of his recruitment, how he was recruited and the routes through which he infiltrated and exfiltrated Rhodesia. This interview sought information regarding the location of training camps, numbers in training camps, camp defences and routes taken by ZANLA in to and out of Mozambique, or Tanzania.

This information was fed to the military, in particular to the air force. Reconnaissance aircraft were sent to corroborate the information. SAS and Selous Scout reconnaissance groups (or pairs) could and were often also deployed.

Special Branch operator Nick Russell records the serial number of this captured ZANLA guerrilla's AK-47, unconcerned that the capture, as cooperative as he may appear, still has charged magazines in his webbing. Photo Nick Russell

This was the point from which planning of external operations would start. Once the operation was underway, Special Branch's role remained the same, internally or externally, and they would be on hand to interview captured personnel. Regarding external operations the interviews would service initial follow-ups and the collection of any recovered documentation. Documents would be examined after the operation and the entire intelligence cycle would start again by

inputting the information obtained from the documents and interviews into the system.

Intelligence never stopped.

Special Branch also had the odd trick up its sleeve that stepped out of the more conventional policing box. For example, they designed transistor radios with tracking devices in them, known as ‘Road Runners’. These would be placed ‘for sale’ in rural stores, knowing that insurgents passing through or operating in that area would take them: the guerrillas needed information broadcast by the Voice of Maputo and from their own ZANLA broadcasts—as well as from within Rhodesia (although little was made available to the Rhodesian public for obvious reasons)—to gain their own intelligence. However, when the radio was turned on the tracking device would be activated, their location identified and the Fire Force mobilized.

Special Branch did not claim to have had all the answers during the war but, when working with other services and units and even individuals like Peter Petter-Bowyer of the air force, they could as a team come up with the answers. Aerial reconnaissance, a crucial branch of the intelligence mechanism fell squarely within the realm of the air force. But the JOC system allowed for a high degree of inter-service collaboration.

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CHAPTER TEN:

LAST LIGHT, FIRST LIGHT

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At this stage a snapshot of our contact looks thus:

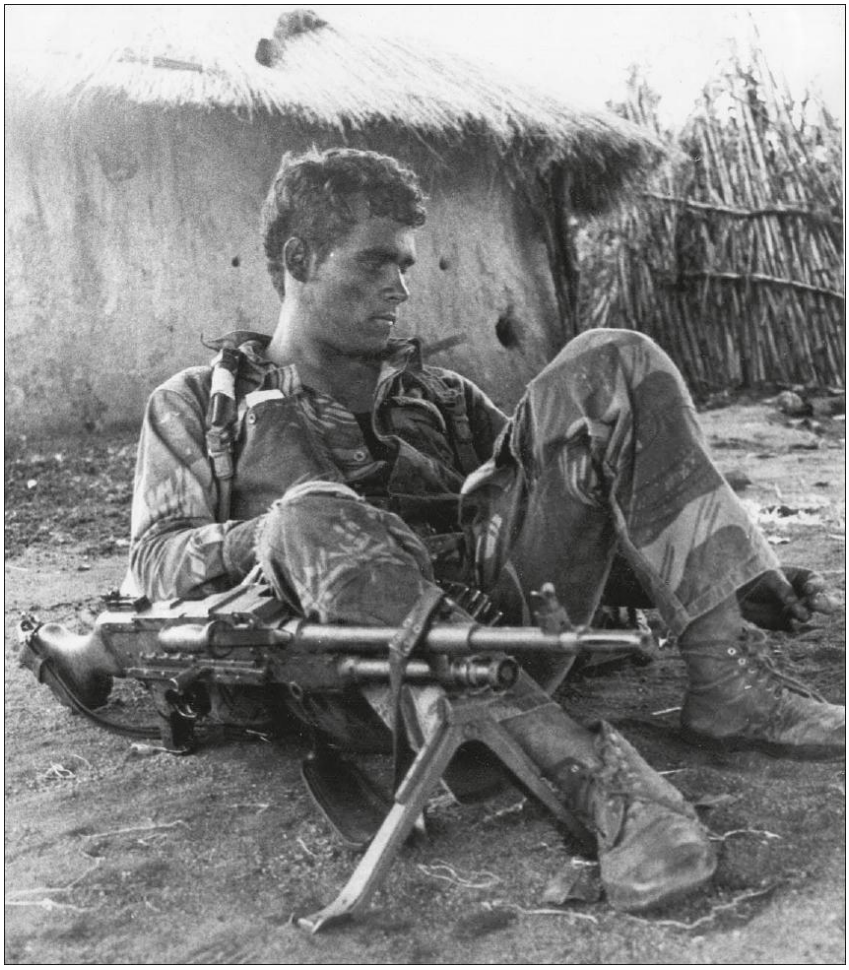
An early morning call-out is fading to last light. Troops from the Rhodesia Regiment, Rhodesian African Rifles, Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Selous Scouts are on the ground, exhausted and dehydrated. The most northerly troops are positioned as a Stop Group along the riverline and consist of the six-man Selous Scout OP and Stop 6. Just south of them and east of the river, below the mielie field but above the kraal line, are Stops 1, 4 and 5. Stop 1 has a man wounded who has, for the meantime, been stabilized by the stick medic. The 20 paratroopers, who crossed the river in extended line, have joined the six Selous Scouts and Stop 6 in the north and Stop 2 to the south of the riverline. The paras have had one casualty evacuation, a rifleman who broke his leg as a result of the low-level jump. They also have a lightly wounded man with them. Stop 3 in the ravine has had a KIA evacuated and a second man has recently taken a round in the shoulder which the stick medic is trying to attend to; however, they have called for a casevac. Due to the duration of the contact the K-Car has had to be swapped out with a stand-by G-Car several times. The stubborn nature of the enemy has necessitated three Lynx strikes and aside from the occasional sporadic and very brief firefight across the breadth of the contact area, a stalemate has been reached, with several ZANLA insurgents having sought refuge in a cave some way up the granite mountain. They are essentially trapped.

Light is fading quickly, fuel and ammunition are dangerously low and the K-Car commander must now, leaving time for the Alouettes to return to Grand Reef, decide how to arrange his battlefield for the night and what final actions can be taken.

The RLI and air force K-Car commanders have decided it is now necessary to quickly wrap up for the day.

The clearing-up operation would involve the troops moving toward a central location within the contact area where the bodies of the dead would be grouped and separated from their weapons. Parachutes would be collected for repacking. These would be ferried by G-Car to the temporary base (or road side) and loaded onto either the Dakota or the Landtail which would head back to the Fire Force base as soon as possible, to get the parachutes back for onward transport to New Sarum where they will be repacked by specialist packers (usually women) at the Parachute Training School, the PTS.

A closer look at the clean-up operation would break it down thus:



An iconic photo of an RLI MAG gunner awaiting uplift after a Fire Force action.

A BSAP policeman inspects the corpses of ZANLA guerrillas brought back to the Marandellas police station for identification.

First out of the contact area would be the casualties, including civilian and enemy casualties. They would be taken to the commando medic at Nyanyadzi for treatment and assessment in terms of the haste with which they may need to be forwarded to a hospital.

Next out are the captured weapons and equipment which are immediately handed over to the Special Branch member.

While this is underway, the paras have returned to their LZ to collect their parachutes and bring them back to a central area in the contact

zone that has been demarcated for the collation of said equipment. The G-Cars will ferry the parachutes to Nyanyadzi and they will be taken back to Grand Reef on the Landtail trucks.

Next out would be the initial attacking troops, that is Stops 1, 2 and 3.

Thereafter, enemy captures and enemy bodies would be removed from the contact area. In the earlier days the bodies of the dead enemy would be placed in body bags and airlifted to Mtoko or Grand Reef or one of the other Forward Air Fields for identification purposes. By the late 1970s the mass of enemy infiltration across the Mozambican border and thus the increasing number of daily contacts, ergo the number of dead, negated the possibility of 'bagging' the dead. They would be placed in a cargo net and uplifted, hanging below the Alouette, to the FAFs. They could also be sent back for identification with the Landtail. However, by late 1978, there was not even time, let alone the resources, to do that and the dead were left where they fell.

At this point it also becomes important for the commander to make a decision regarding the OP. Of course, in our case, the Selous Scout OP position has not only been compromised but the men have become involved in the contact. However, on many occasions the initiating OP remains clandestine and for the most part uninvolved.

Two schools of thought now exist. One, the OP is still clandestine or two, the OP has been compromised. Although the enemy has at no stage had visual confirmation of the OP position, proximity or indeed presence, it is a given, due to the Fire Force's arrival and the ensuing contact that the enemy has been tipped off. Again two scenarios may play out: one, the enemy would leave the area, or two, they would come back, assuming that the OP had been withdrawn. So, to leave the Scouts in place or to withdraw them? It is a call the CO of the Selous Scouts will make in collaboration with the Fire Force commander.

The decision to leave troops in the contact area after an action was regarded by some Fire Force commanders as necessary but frowned upon by others. The idea behind leaving men overnight was for them to set up ambushes in the hope that some of the enemy would return, or to deal with any guerrillas who had yet to exfiltrate the area. But the chances of this were so negligible as to be non-existent, that the value of perhaps accounting for one or two further kills was negated by having several sticks tied up. All it did was tire out the troops who had been under a fair degree of stress that day and would, in all probability, be called out again on Fire Force the following day, often more than once. Another consideration in leaving highly trained troops in a contact area overnight was that, if it became a norm, the troops would have to start carrying more supplies with them, vastly increasing the weight they carried into action, which would directly affect their agility, mobility and effect during a contact, the key facets to a successful Fire Force. However, in our scenario where it is known that several guerrillas are still in situ in the cave, the commander has decided to leave strategically placed ground troops behind, one of which is Stop 4 whose stick leader will be in overall command overnight.

A moody shot of the FAF revetments at dawn. The aircraft are a Trojan (foreground), a Lynx and two Alouette IIIs.

The Fire Force commander has decided on one last attempt to dislodge the guerrillas in the cave by calling in an airstrike by a pair of Hawker Hunters. As the Fire Force leaves, the Hunters take off from Thornhill Air Force Base in Gwelo.

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CONCLUSION

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This narrative has not expanded outside the boundaries of Rhodesia. It has not examined what was termed the ‘Jumbo’ Fire Force where the same principles of the Fire Force were applied to larger raids on external enemy camps or to large-scale saturation operations internally. I believe that the contained, agile, rapid-response military operation that took place internally is the ‘classic’ Fire Force and does not—although the same aircraft, troops, weapons and strategic thinking were applied externally—conform to the tailored specifications of the ‘Jumbo’ Fire Force.

One obvious deviation is that the commander of external operations was not stationed in a K-Car 800 feet above the contact area. For external operations or so-called Jumbo Fire Forces, the commander controlled the battle from a Lynx or DC-7, orbiting high above the contact area, with the strike attack aircraft below him and the Alouettes (and Bells) below them.

Thus, to conclude, the above facets will be drawn together within an internal context.

Internal Fire Force operations were mostly extremely successful, but they depended on a number of factors: the calibre of the troops, the experience of the air crew, including the K-Car commander and pilot, the number of available aircraft and, importantly but oft forgotten, the terrain and weather. The K-Car’s optimal orbiting height was 800 feet; if the cloud base was any lower than that the deadly 20mm cannon was hamstrung, placing the ground troops under enormous

additional pressure, aside from the obvious issue that the commander and pilot were blind to the contact area and had no visual contact with their troops.

According to Nigel Henson, one tends to read in books about how marvellously contacts and firefights were conducted but, “They don’t go marvellously. You had to be extremely flexible, very light on your feet, quick-witted in terms of quick thinking and rapid reactions and certainly your troops had to be exactly the same.”

Modern conflicts rage all over the world. This one is now over 35 years old but the principles remain the same, bringing into question whether the classic Fire Force of 1977–1979 would still be relevant in modern conflicts.

Where it is necessary to locate and eliminate small bands of lightly equipped insurgents trying to avoid detection, it certainly is. The concept of encircling them, whether by using paratroops or helicopters or any other aircraft remains the same. A rapid, vertical envelopment of the enemy with highly trained, highly motivated and highly disciplined elite troops remains relevant

Where modern conflicts take place within an urban environment the Fire Force may not, as a whole, be workable since it was designed and developed for bush warfare.

But certainly some of the lessons regarding army–air cooperation, the equipping of the troops and the procedures of mounting a quick-reaction force are the kind of lessons one carries forward into any military situation.

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Kerrin Cocks is a journalist by profession and has worked in the military-history publishing industry for fifteen years. She ghost wrote Mzee Ali: The Biography of an African Slave-raider Turned Askari and Scout (30° South, 2006 and 2015) and conceptualized the Africa@War series (copublished by 30° South and Helion & Co.). In 2009 she scripted, directed, produced and edited the full-length DVD documentary that accompanied Dr Richard Wood's book Counter-Strike from the Sky: The Rhodesian All-arms Fireforce in the War in

the Bush, 1974–1980, which was bought and aired on the New Zealand Documentary Channel. In 2010 she produced a short documentary on the SADF Pathfinder Company, founded by Colonel Jan Breytenbach and ably led by Sergeant-Major Pete McAleese. In 2014 she co-authored I Won't Be Home Next Summer: Flight Lieutenant R.N. Selley DFC (1917–1941) with Ron Selley. She has edited, proofread and/or commissioned in excess of a hundred military history titles. She is an honorary member of the Rhodesian Light Infantry Regimental Association.

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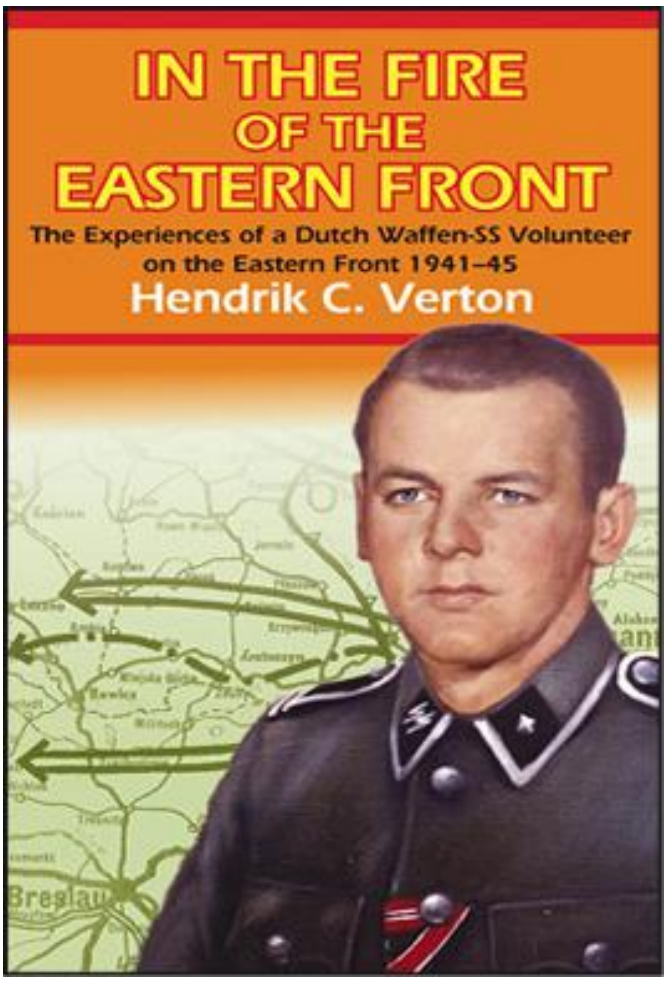

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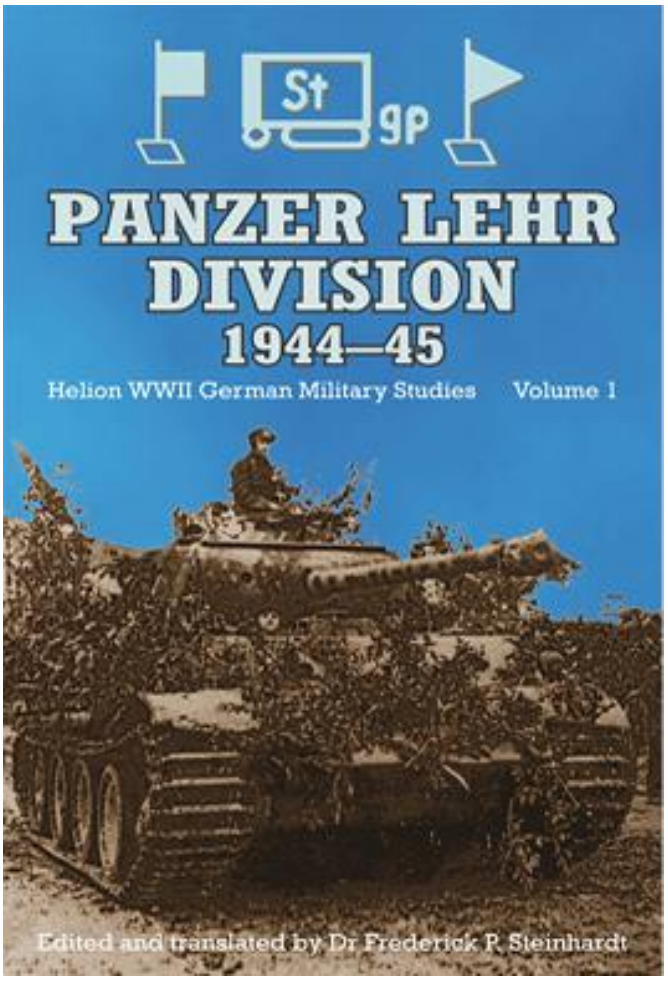

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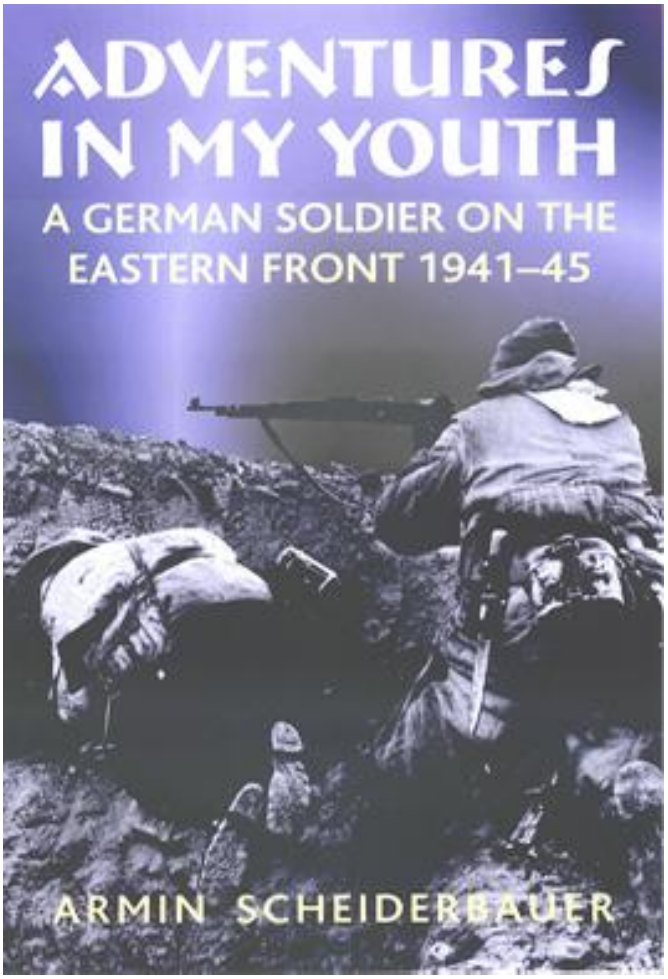

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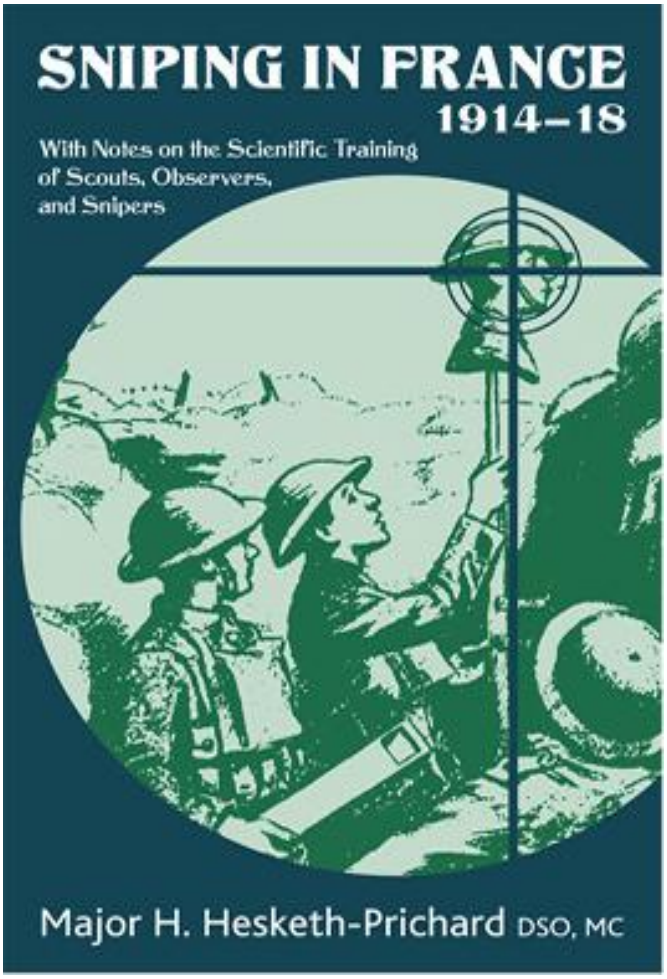
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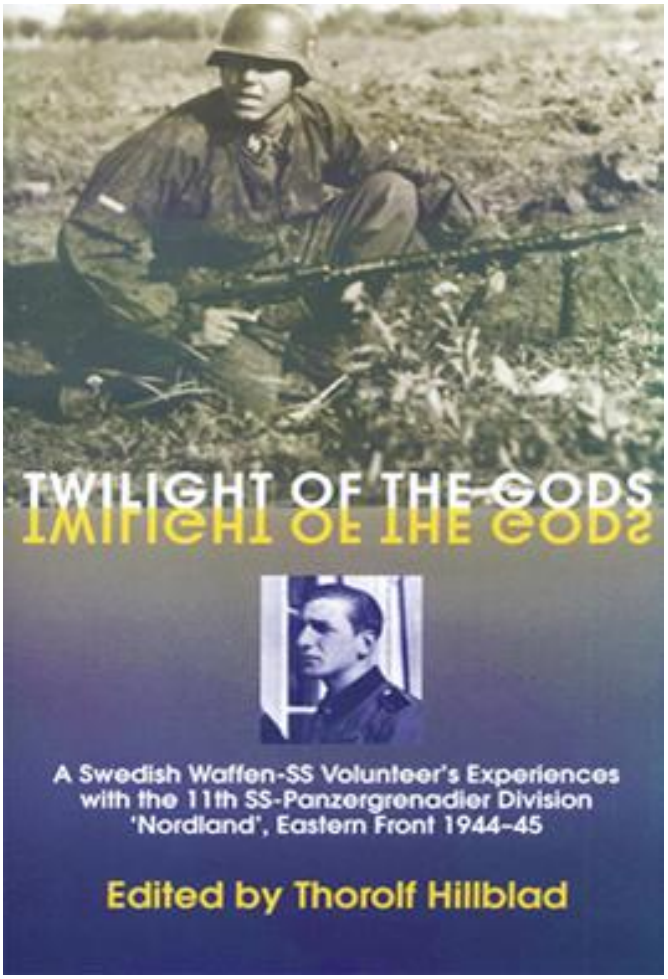
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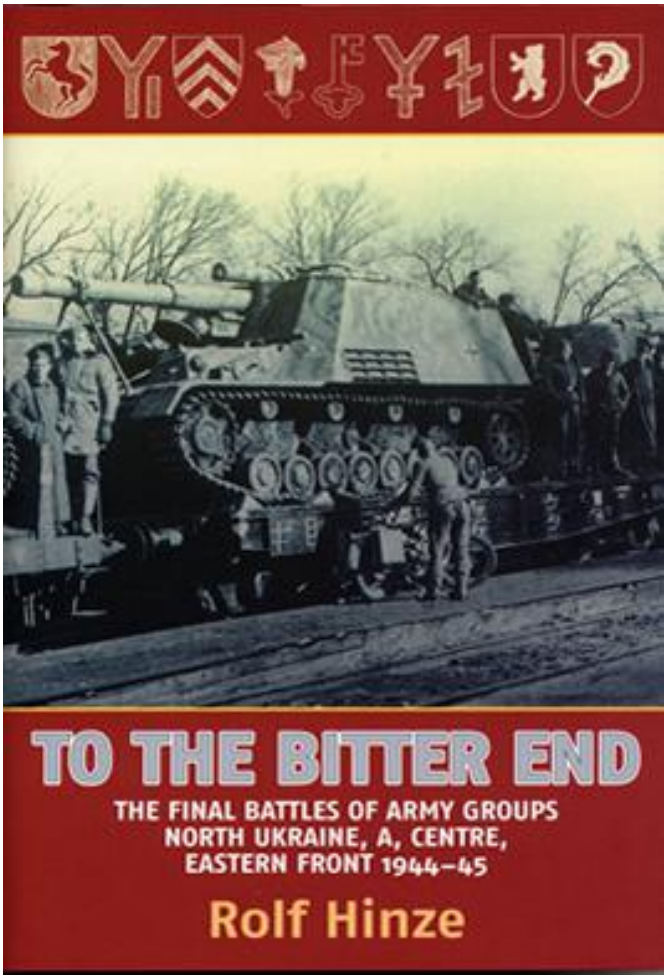

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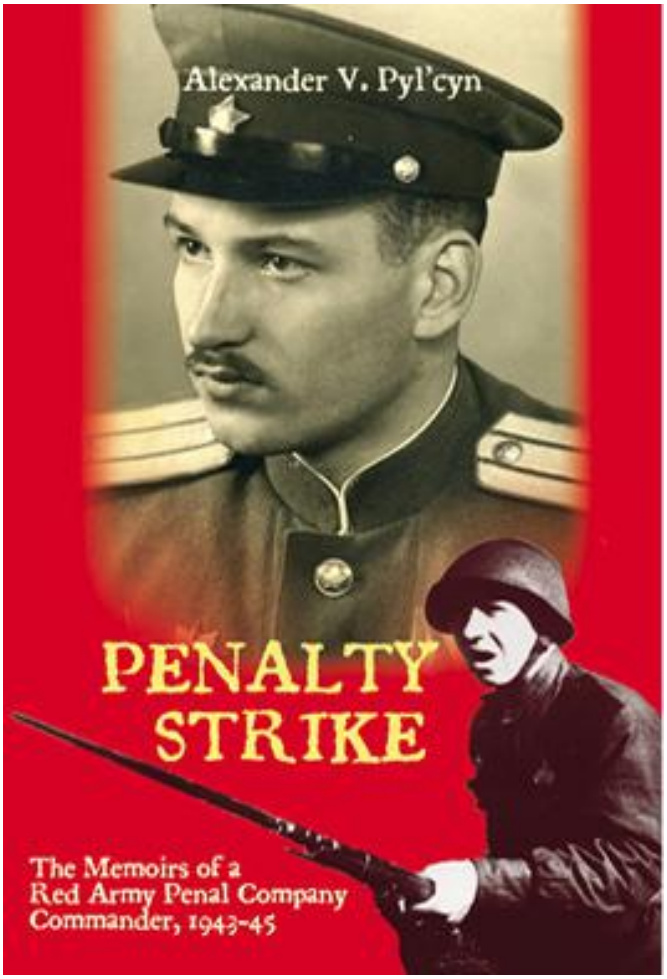

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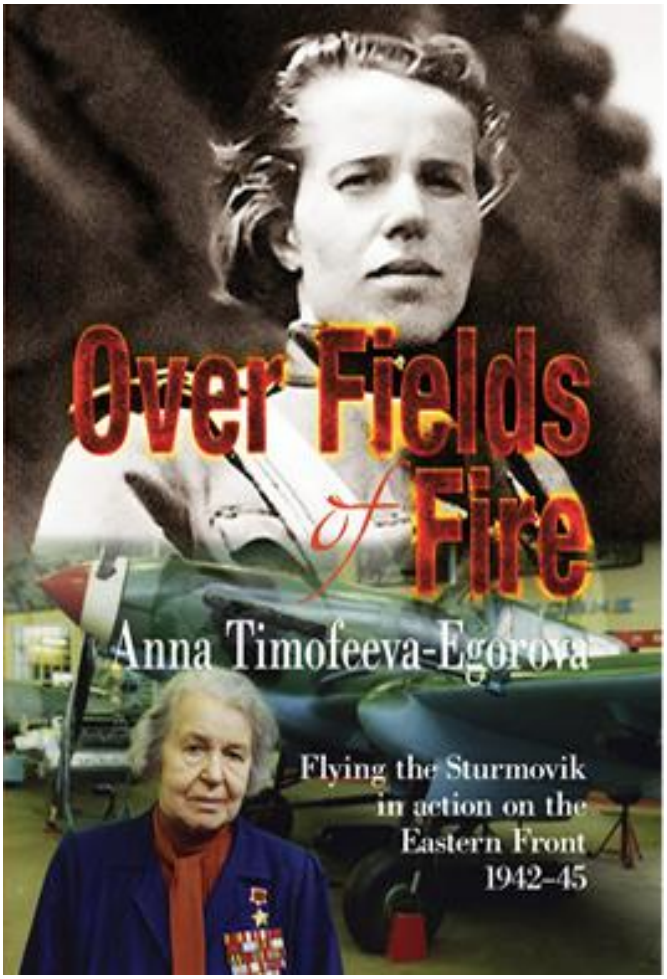

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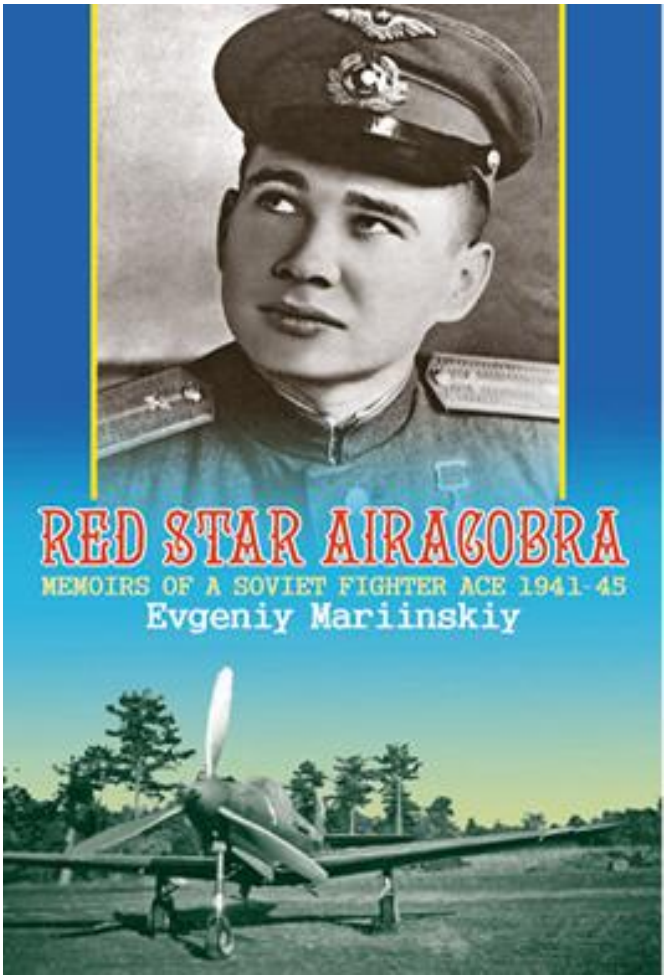

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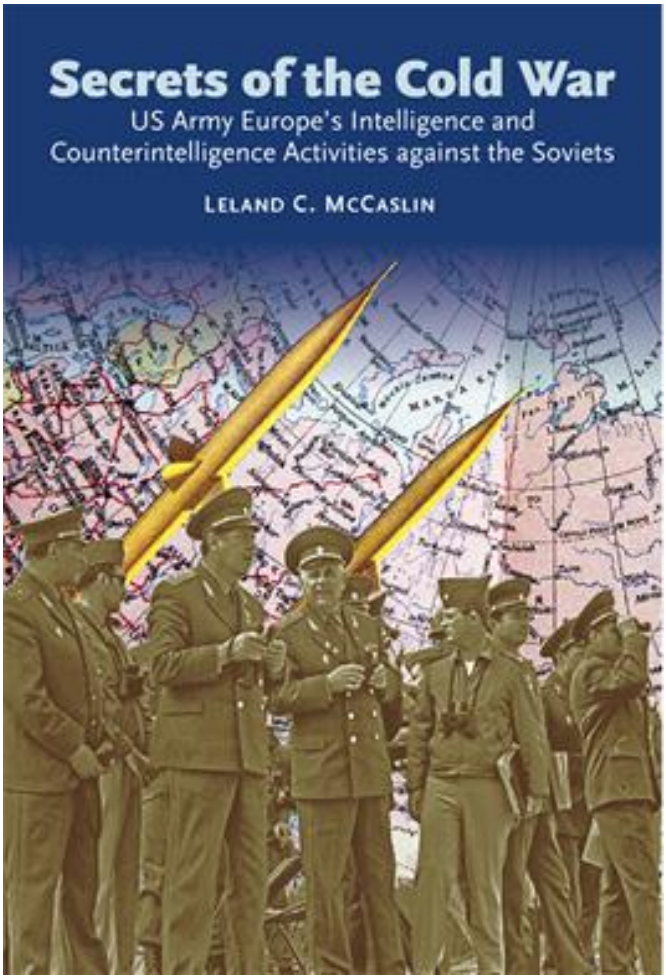
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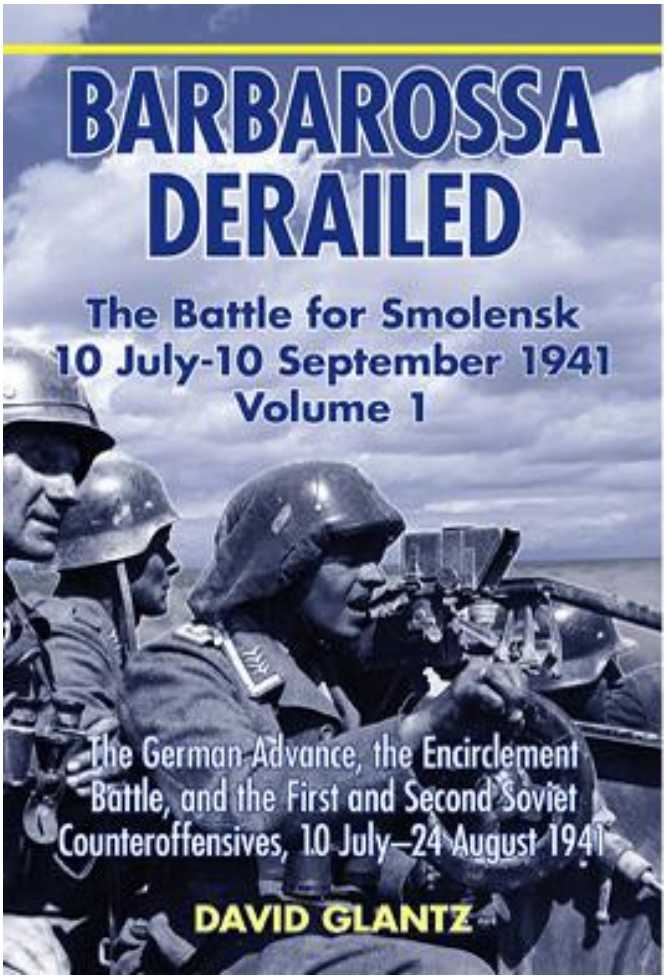

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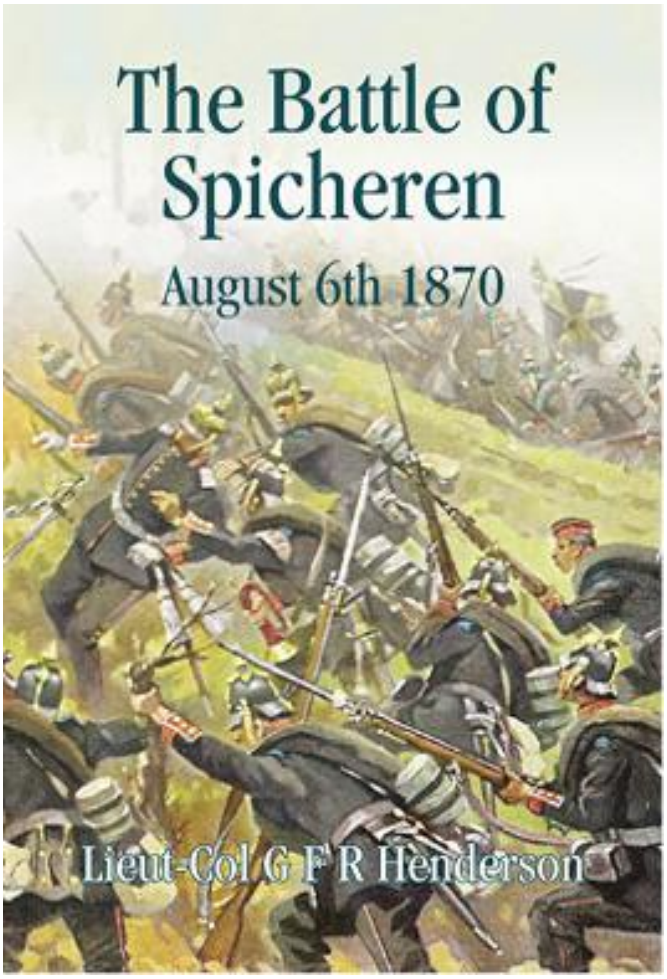

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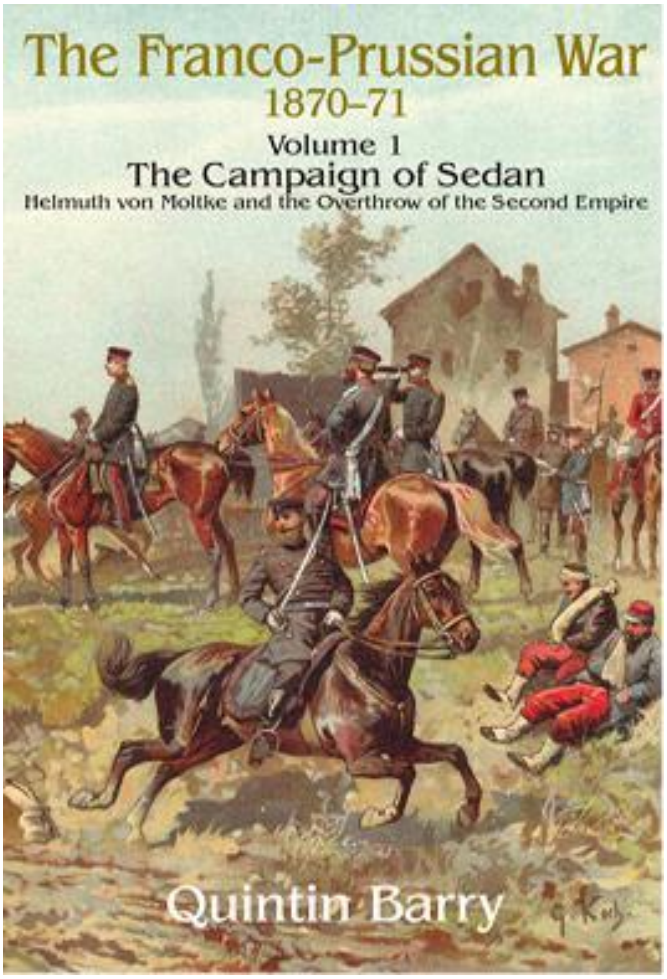

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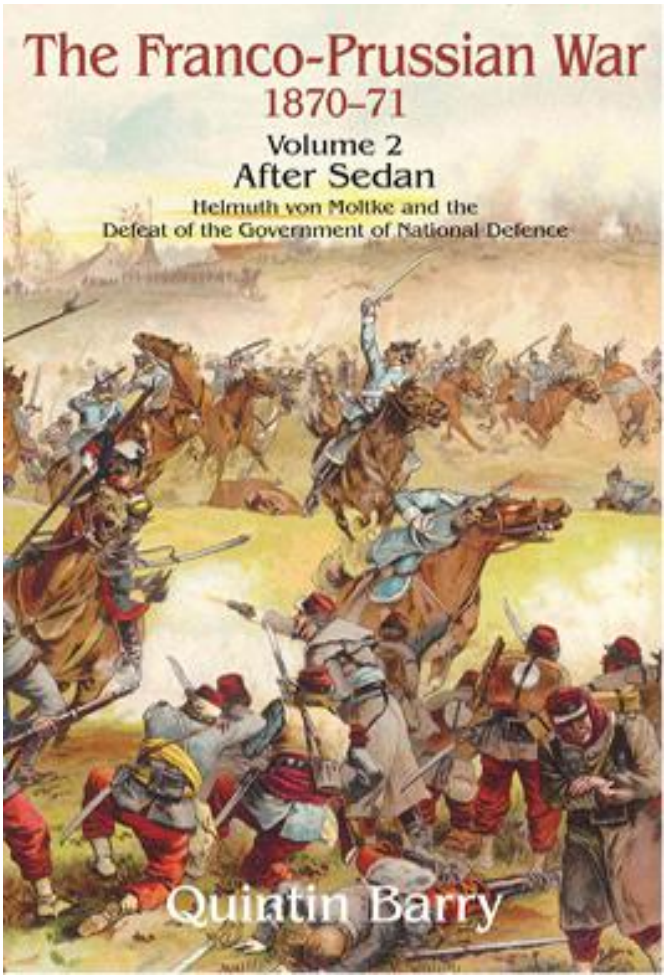

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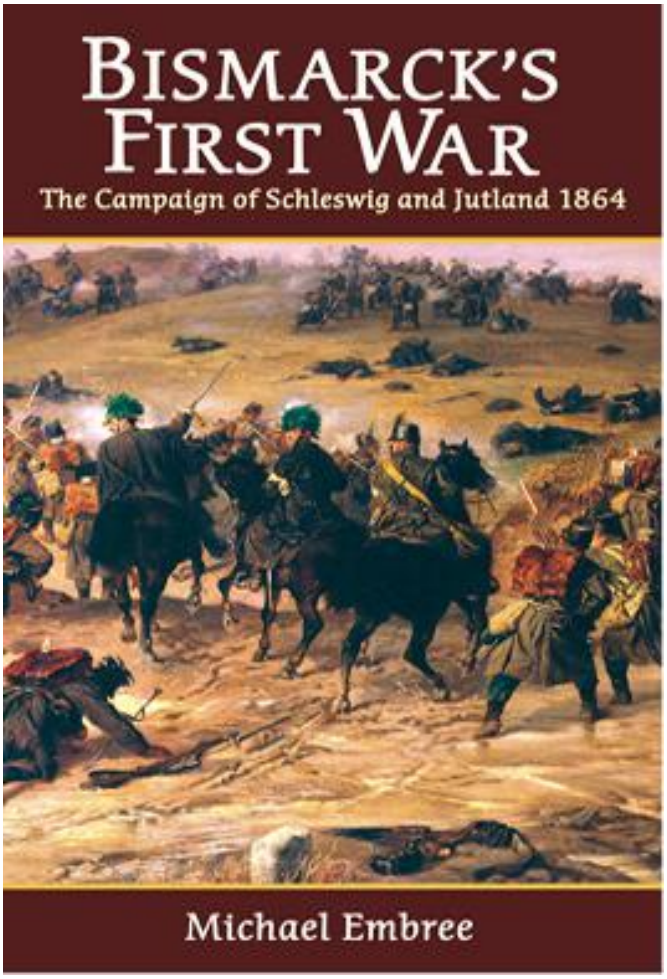

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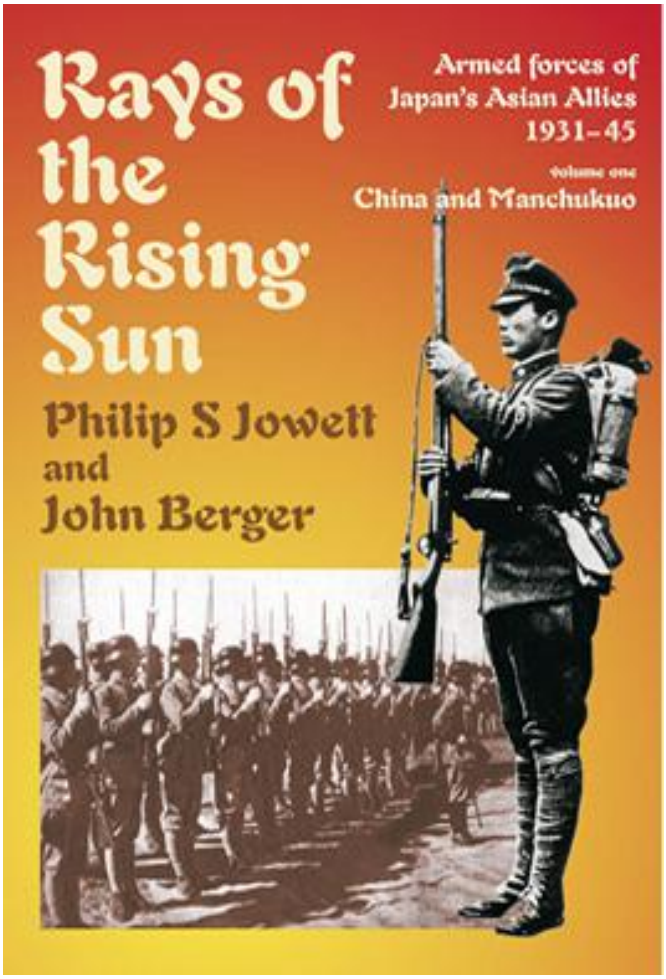

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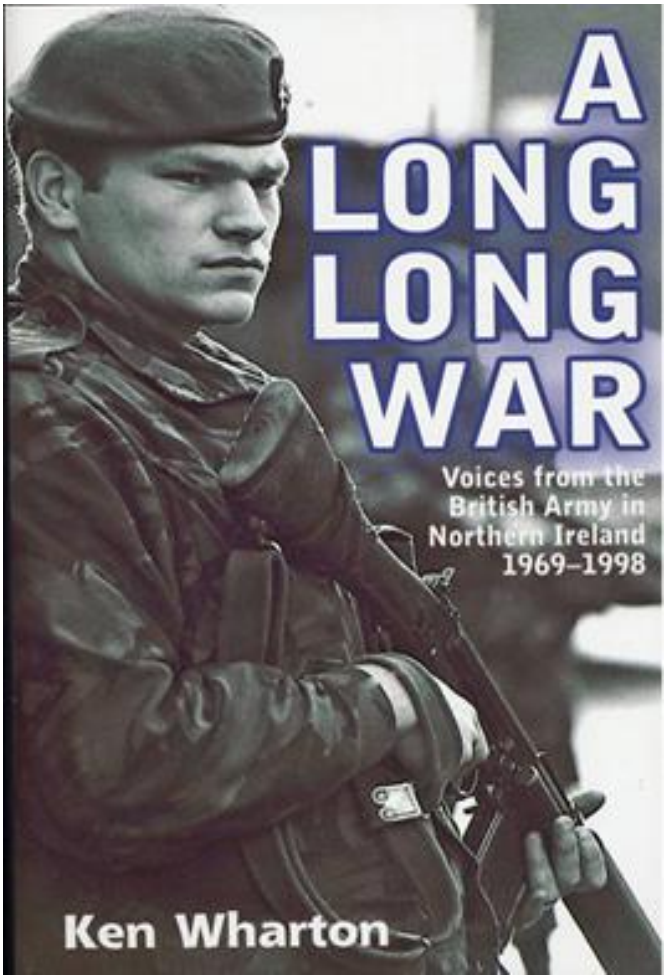

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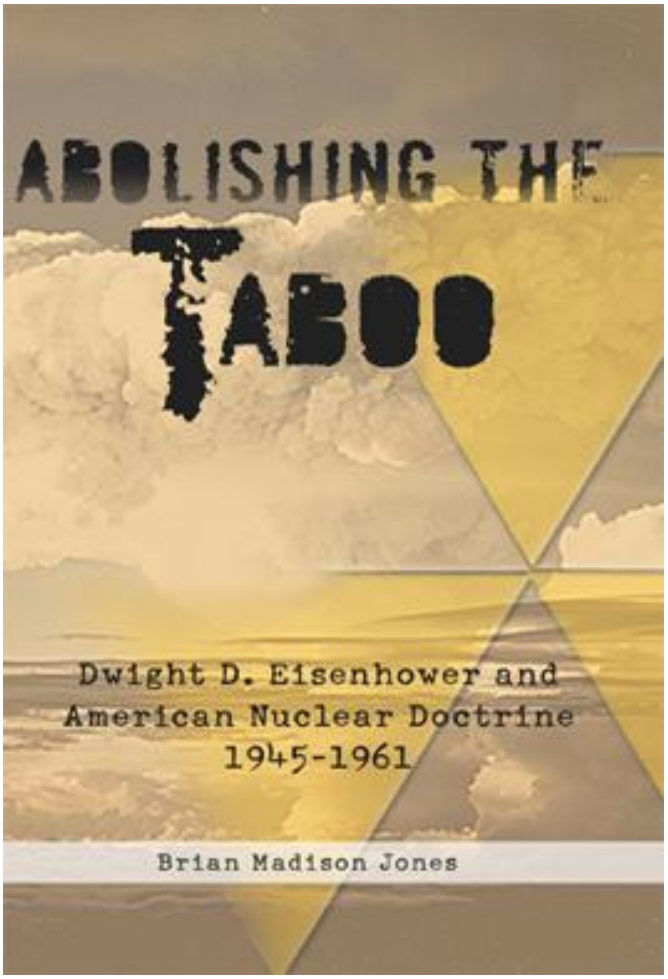

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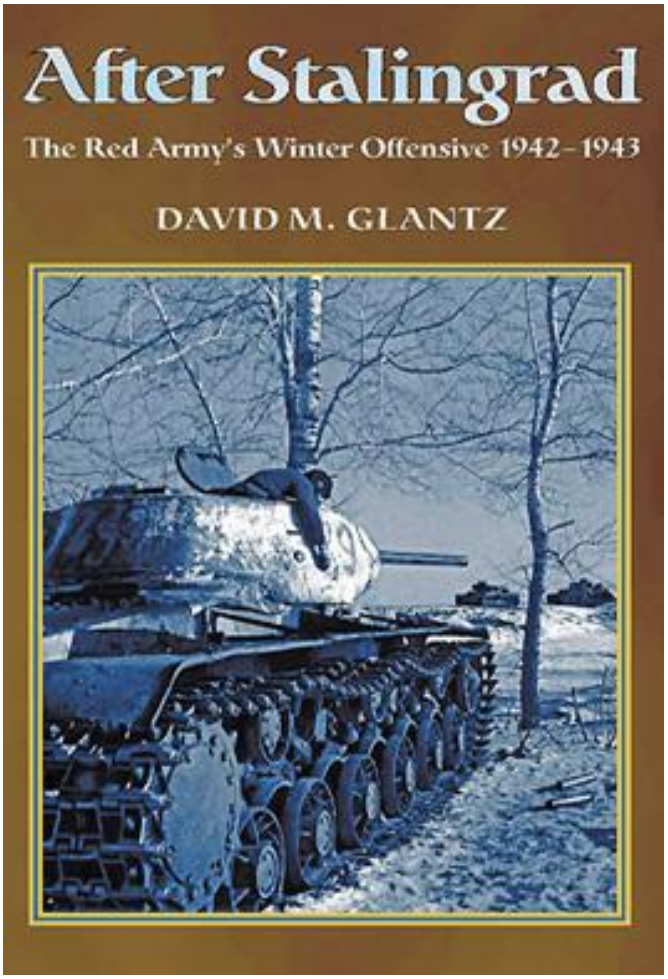

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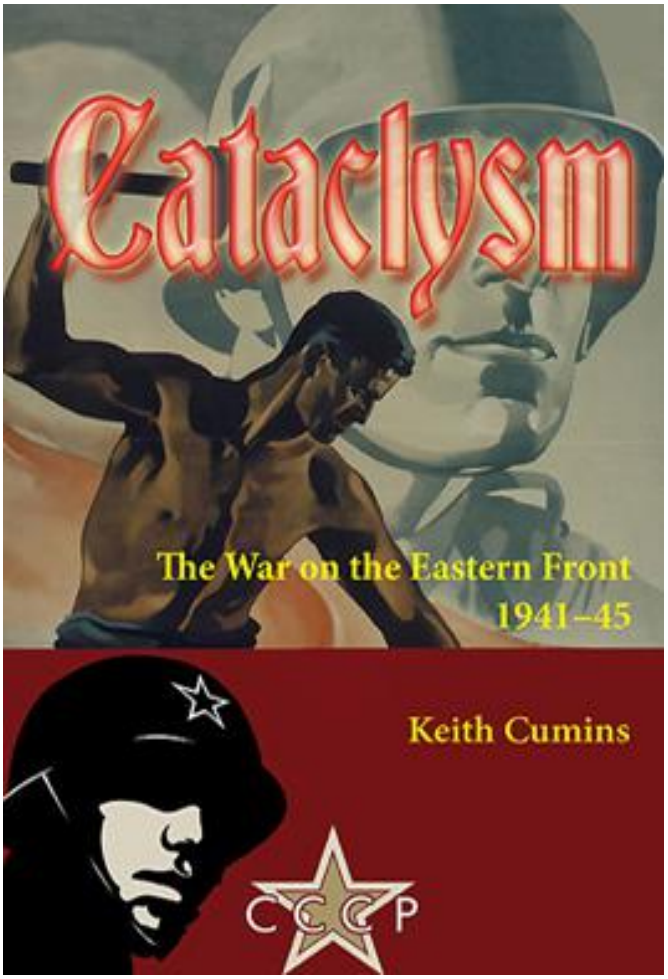

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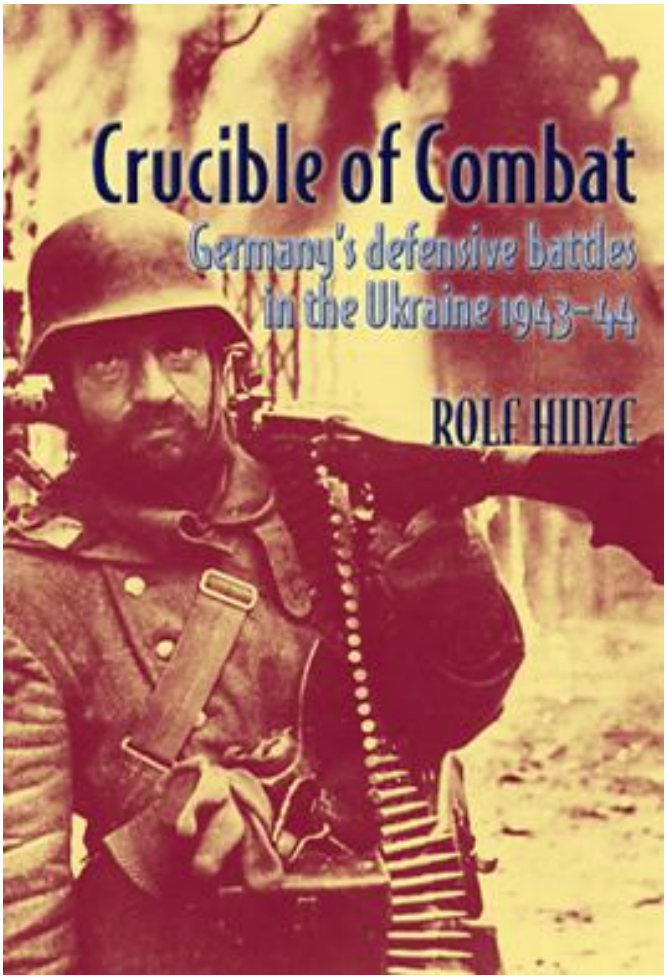

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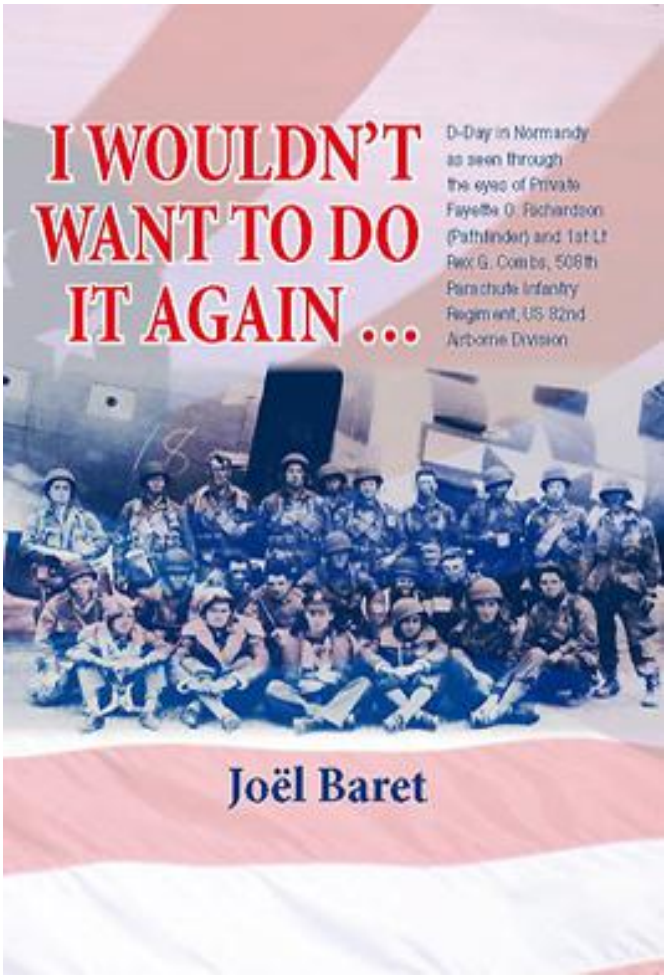
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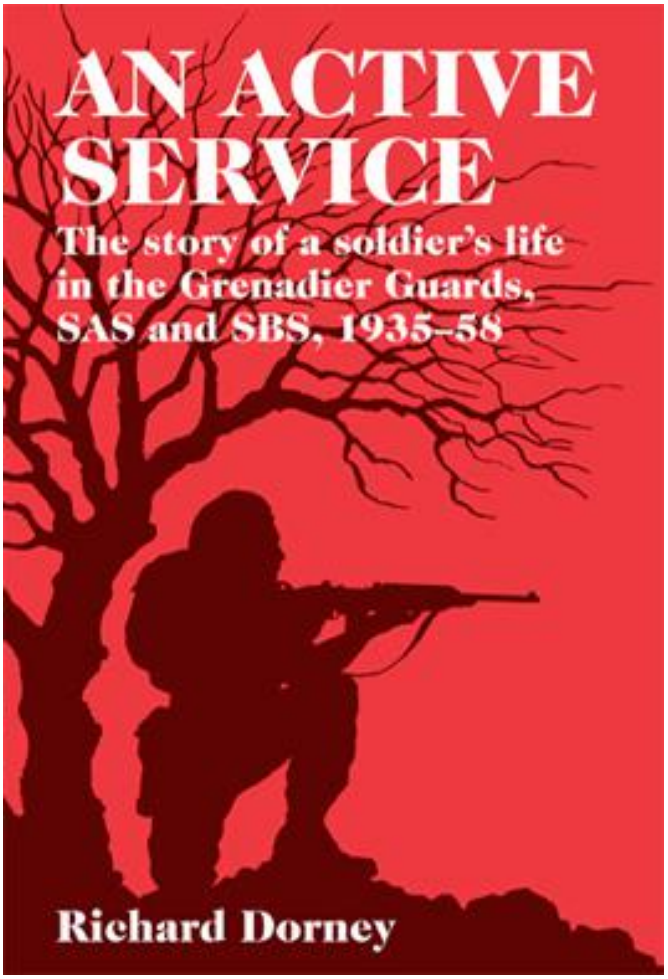

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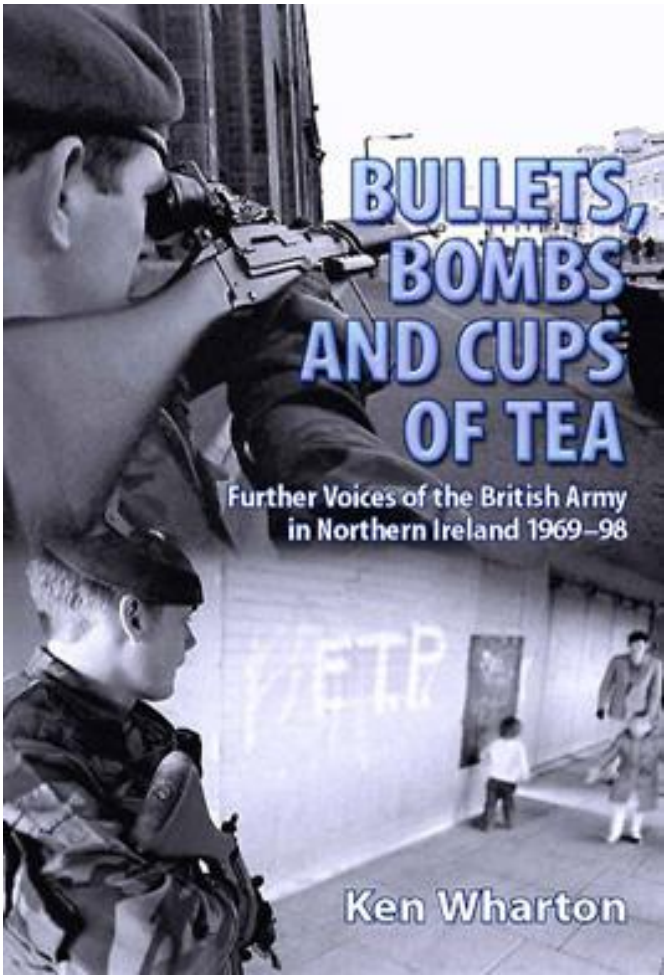

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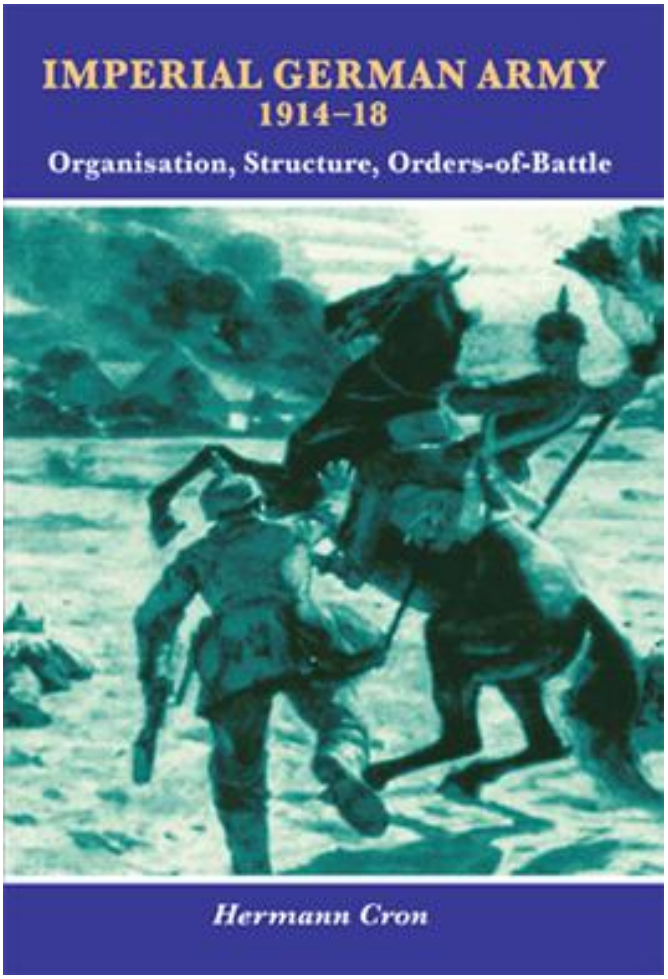

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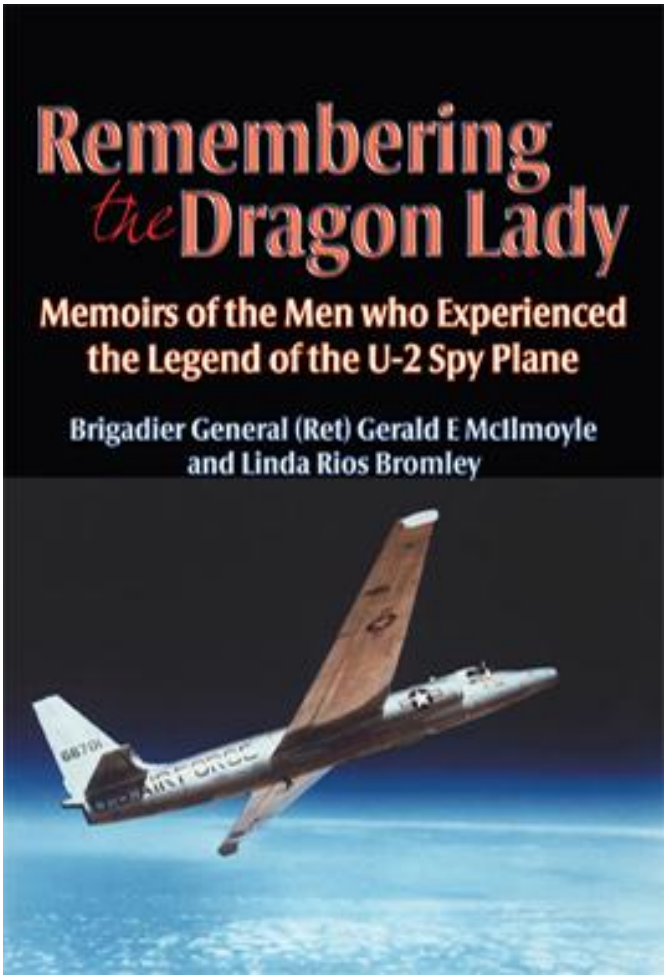
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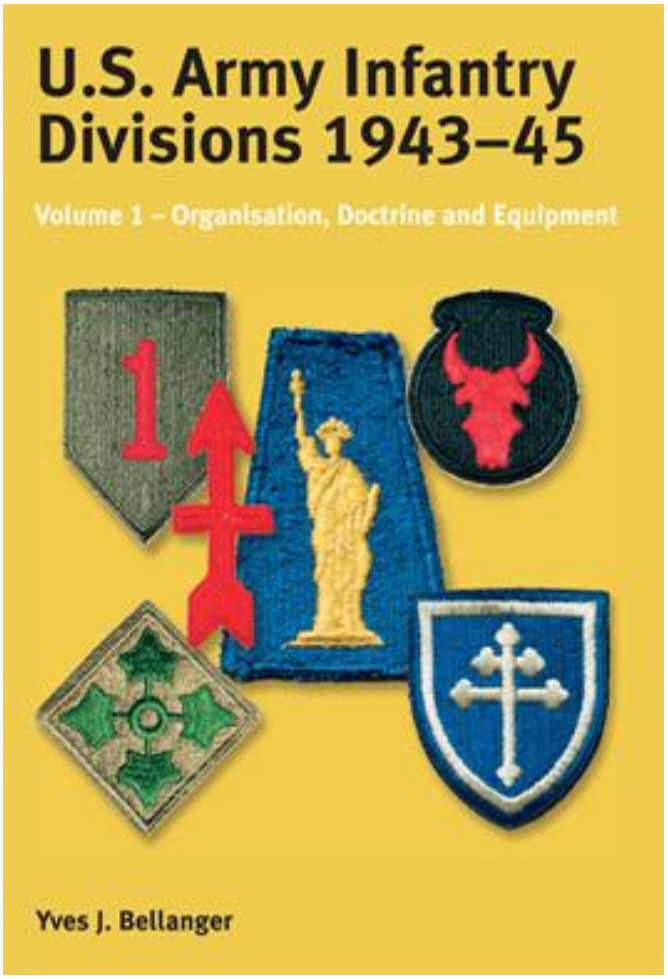

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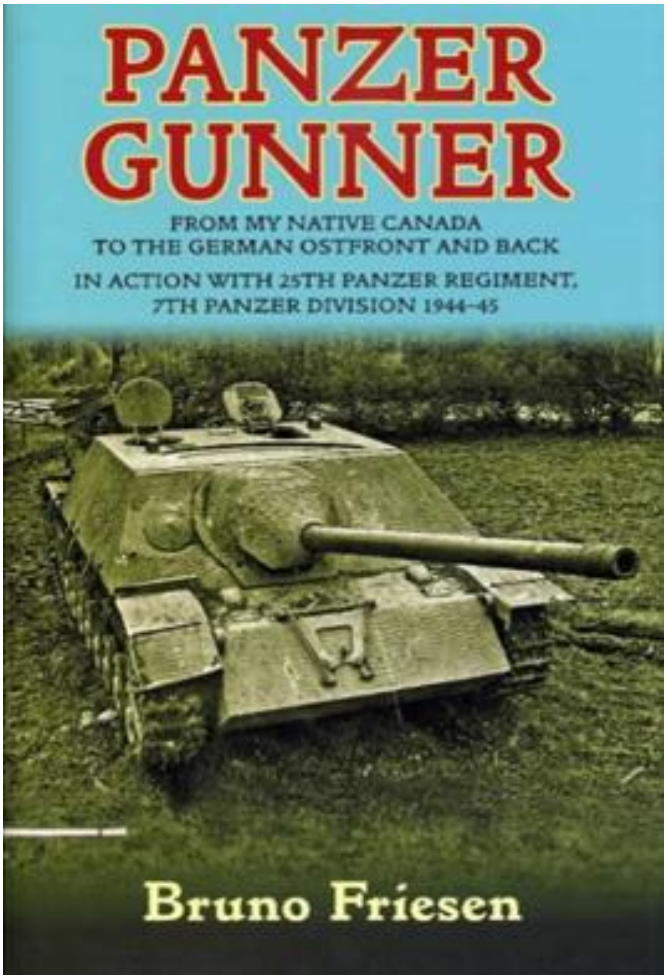

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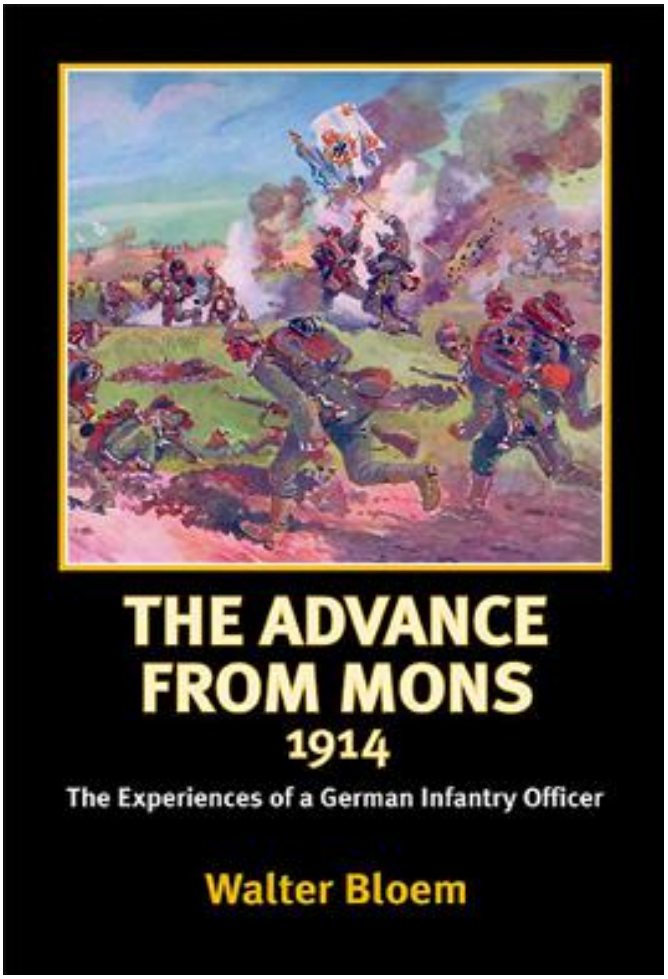

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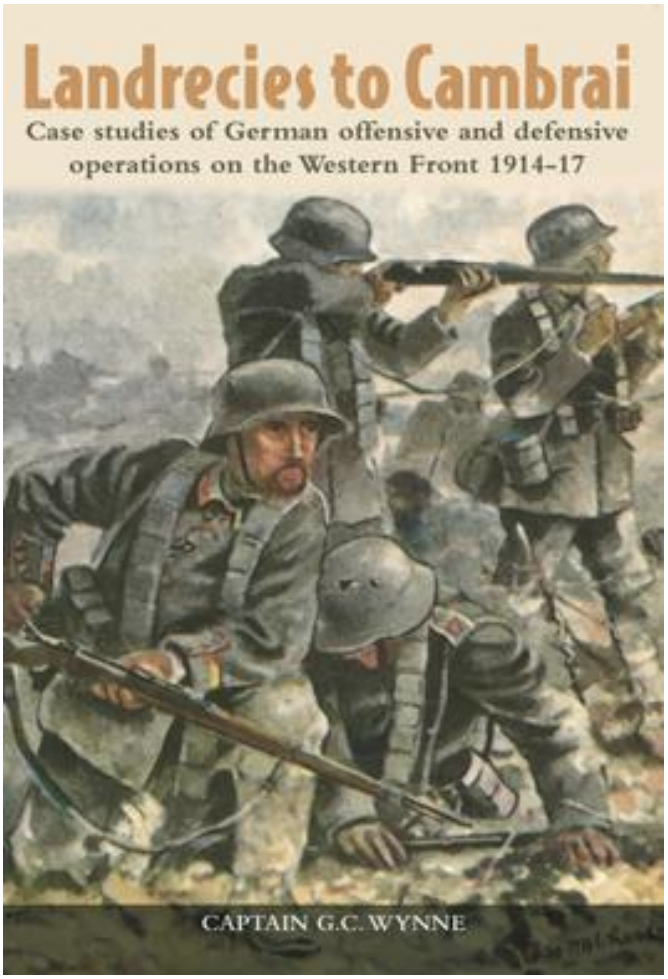
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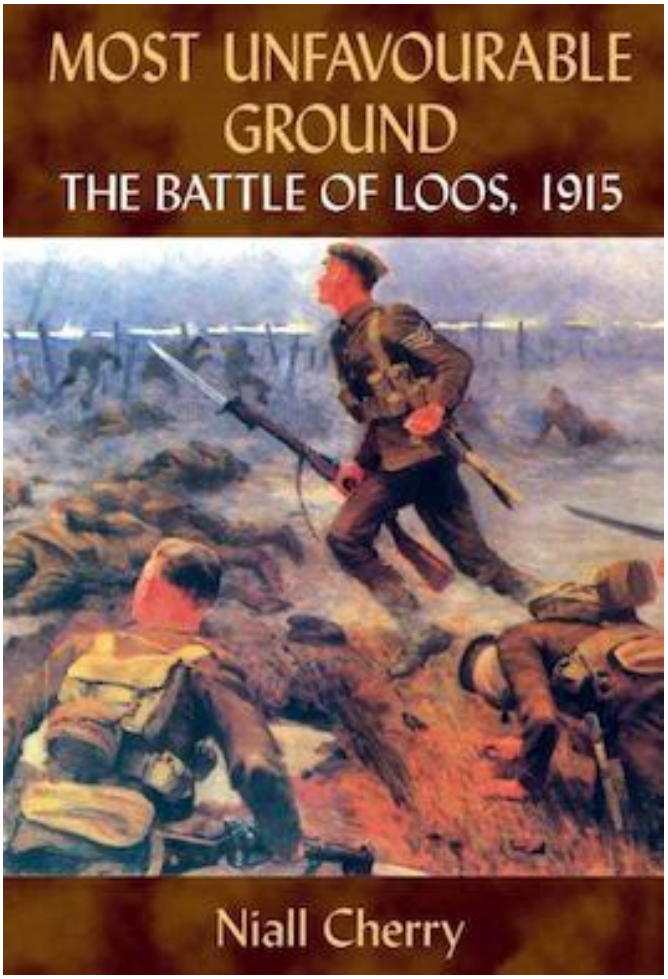

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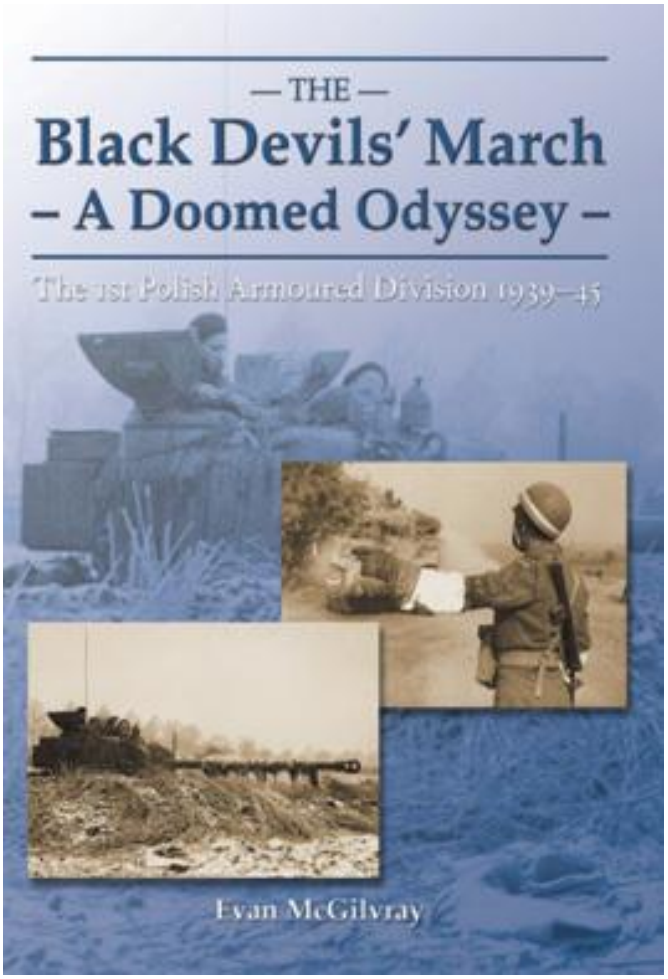

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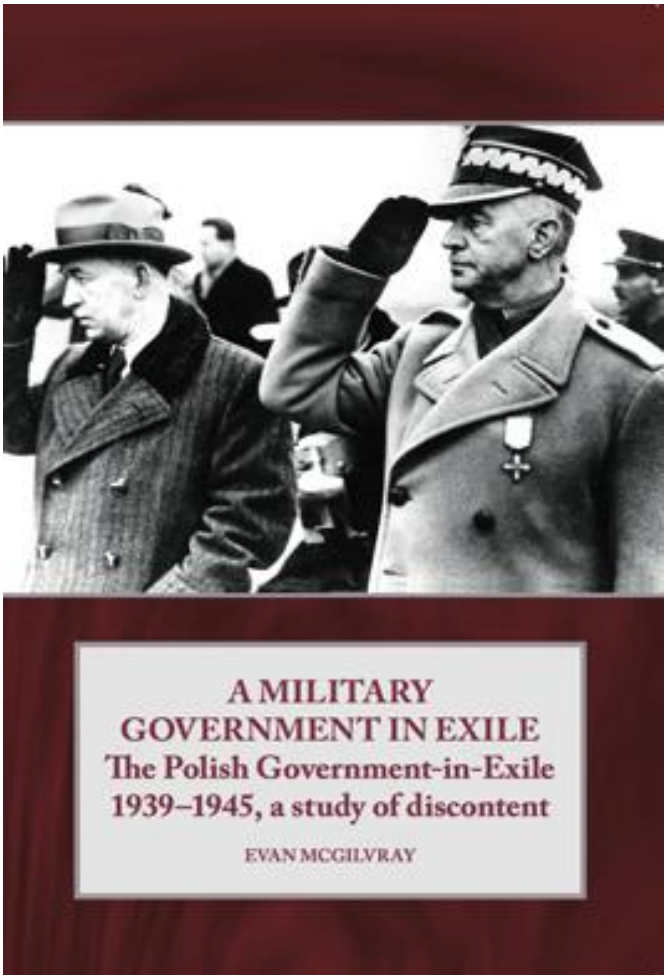

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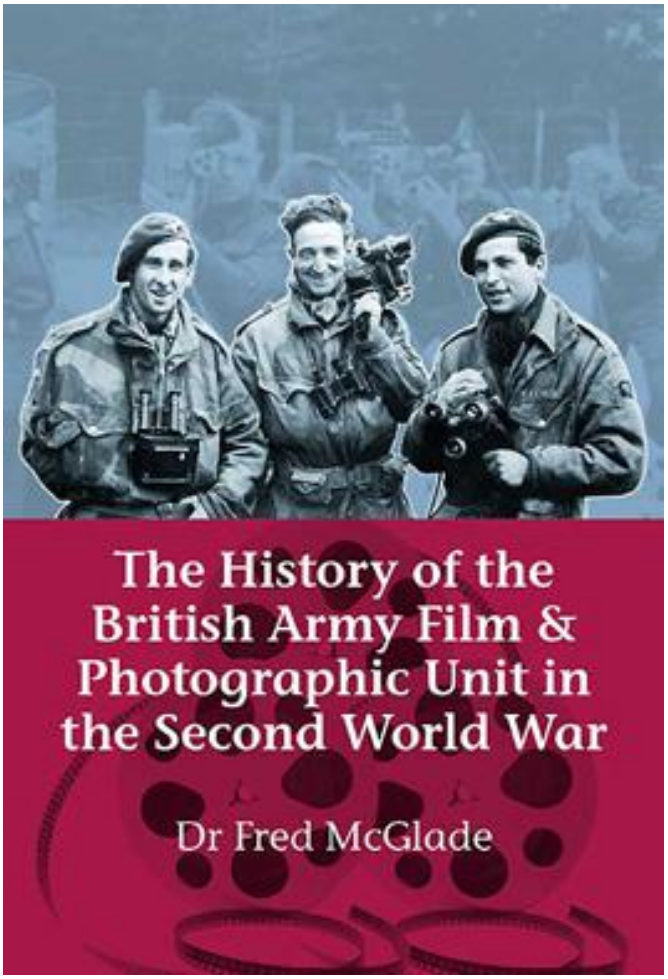

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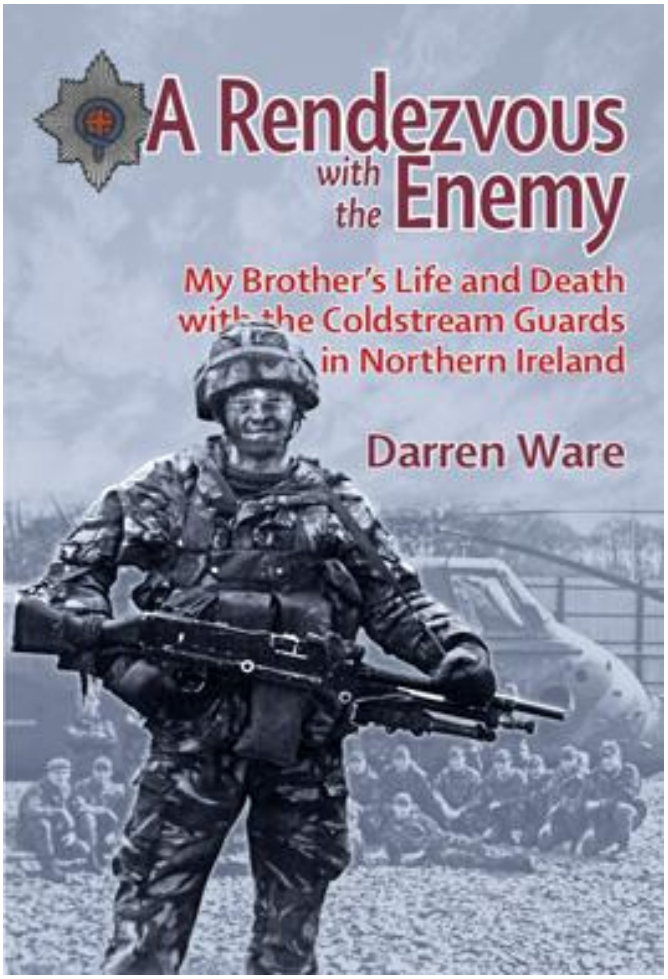

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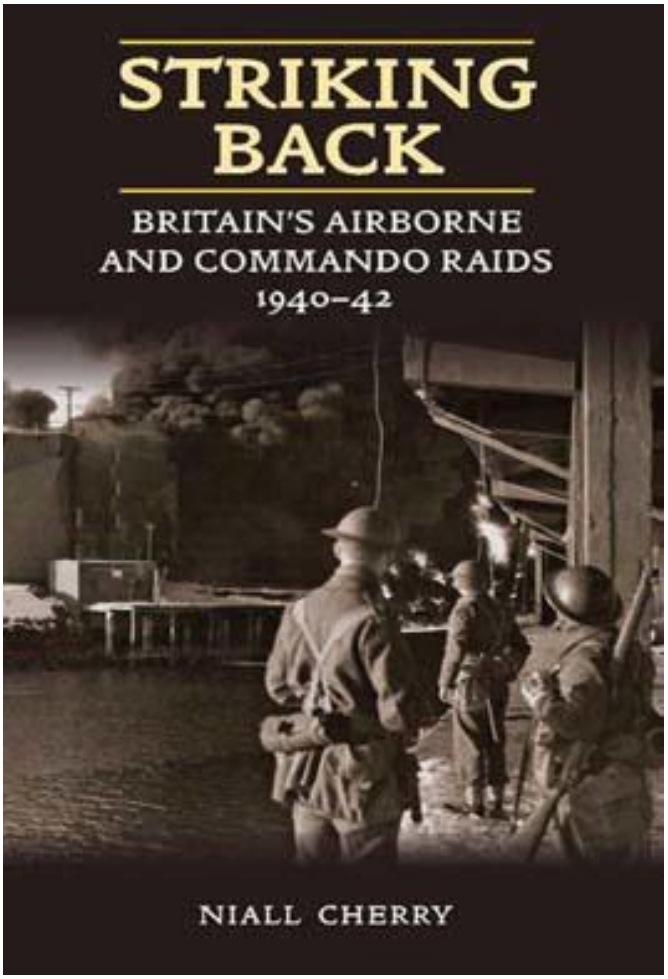

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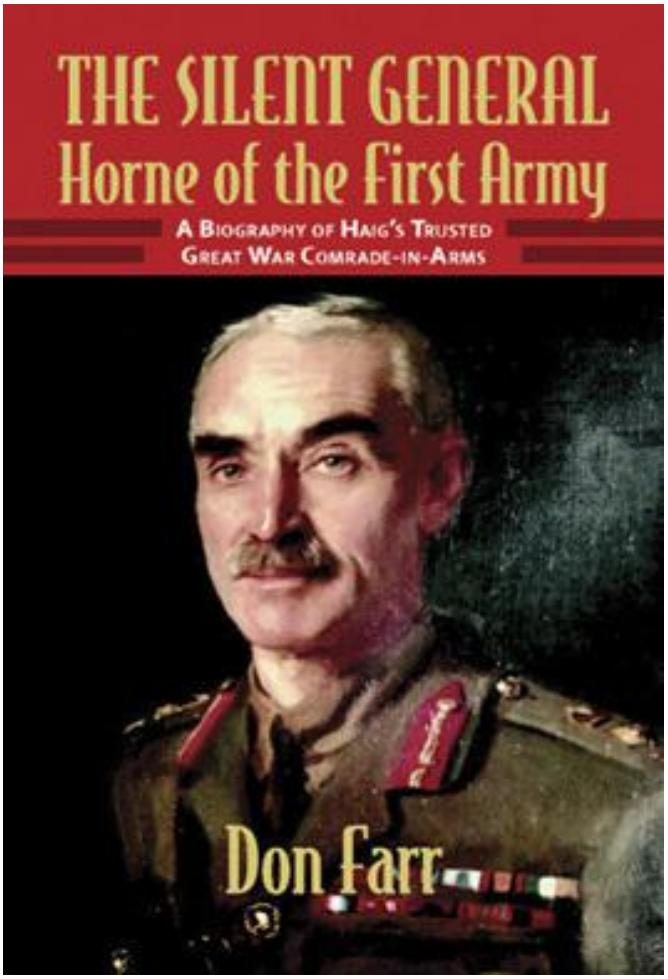

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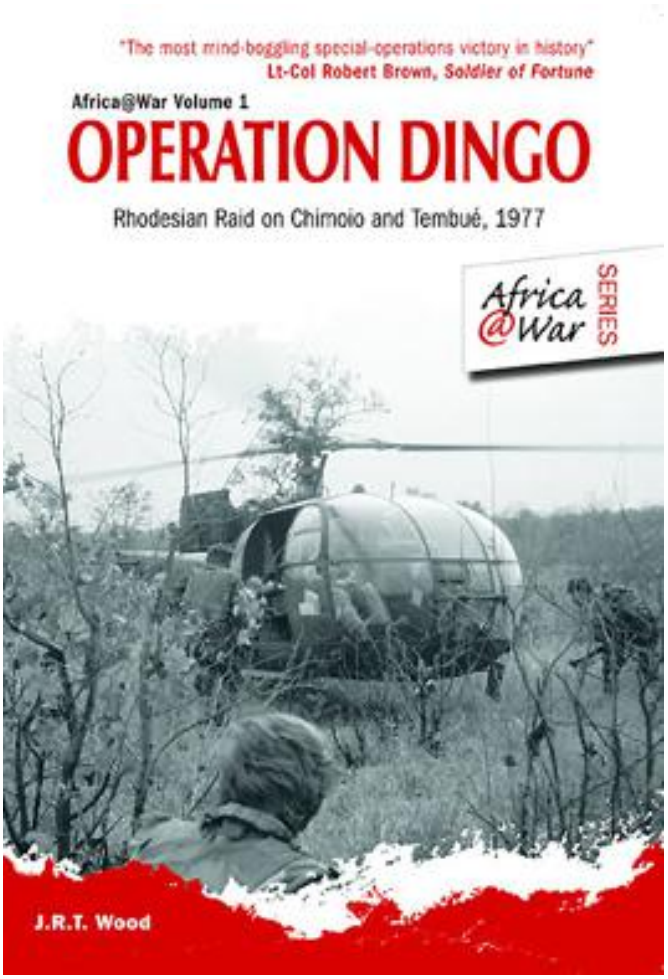
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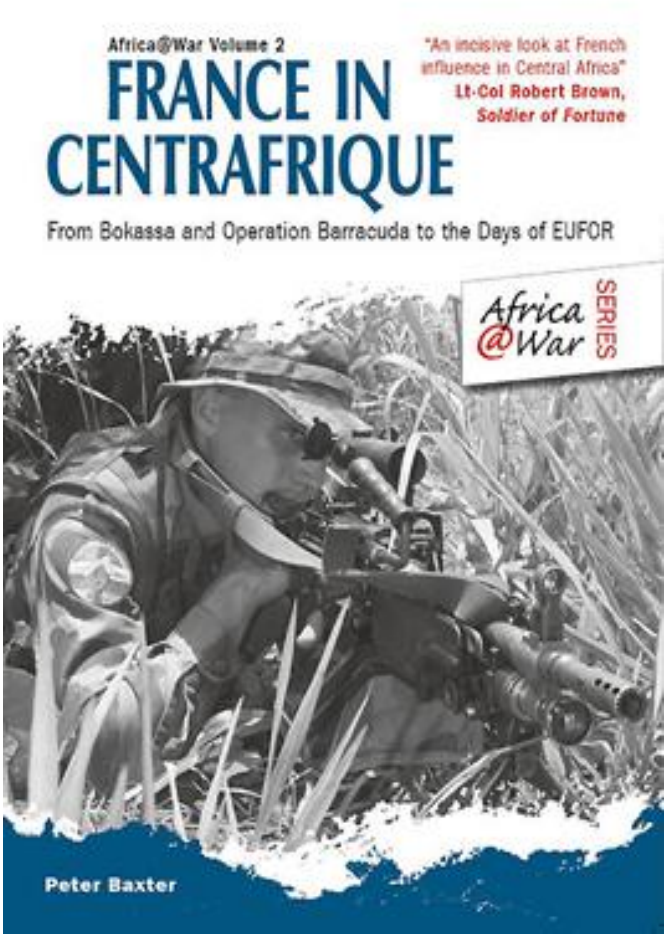
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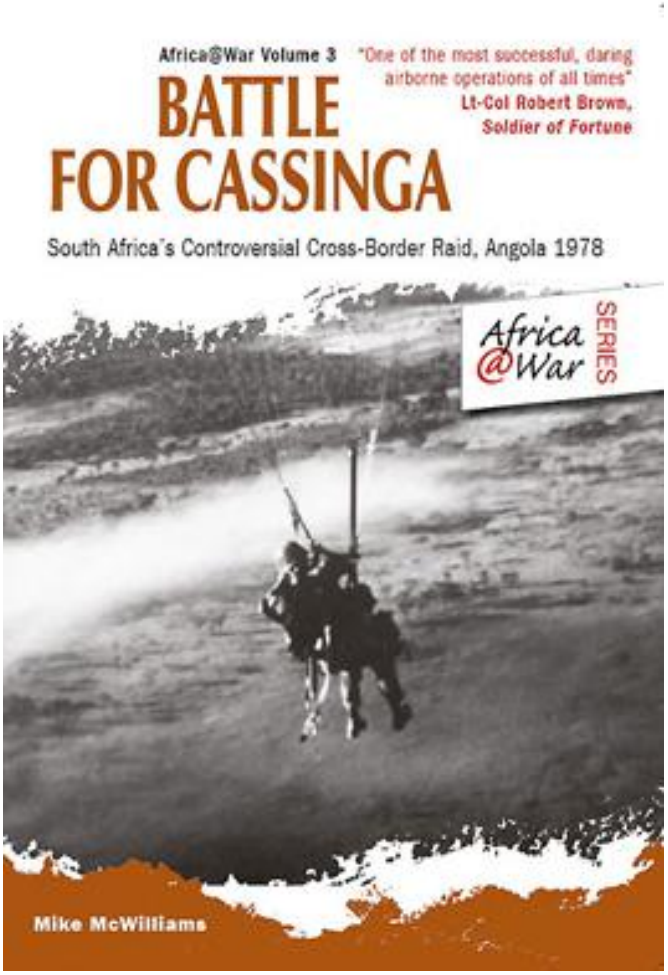
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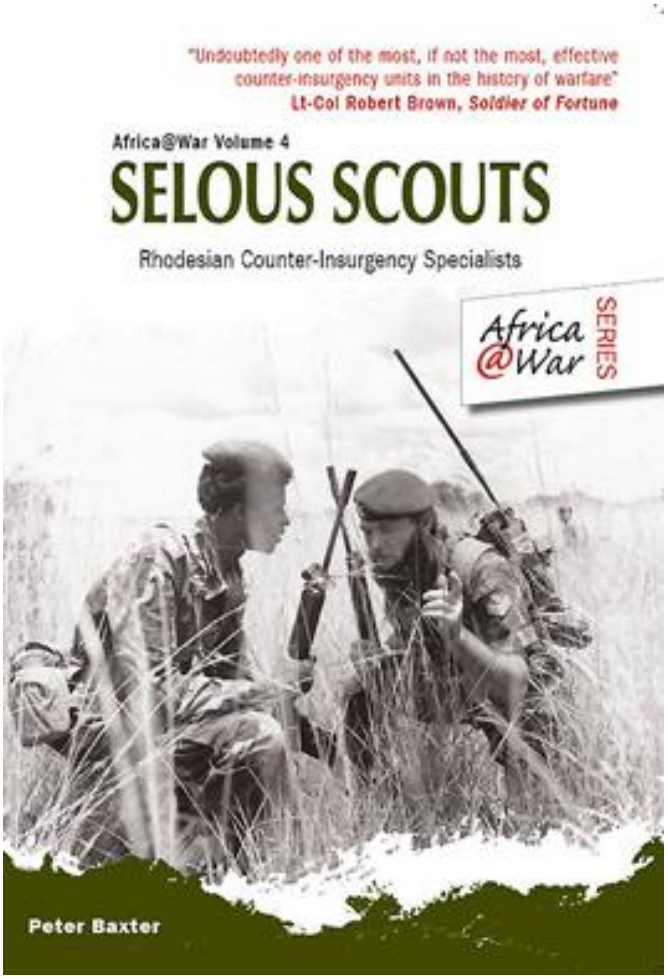
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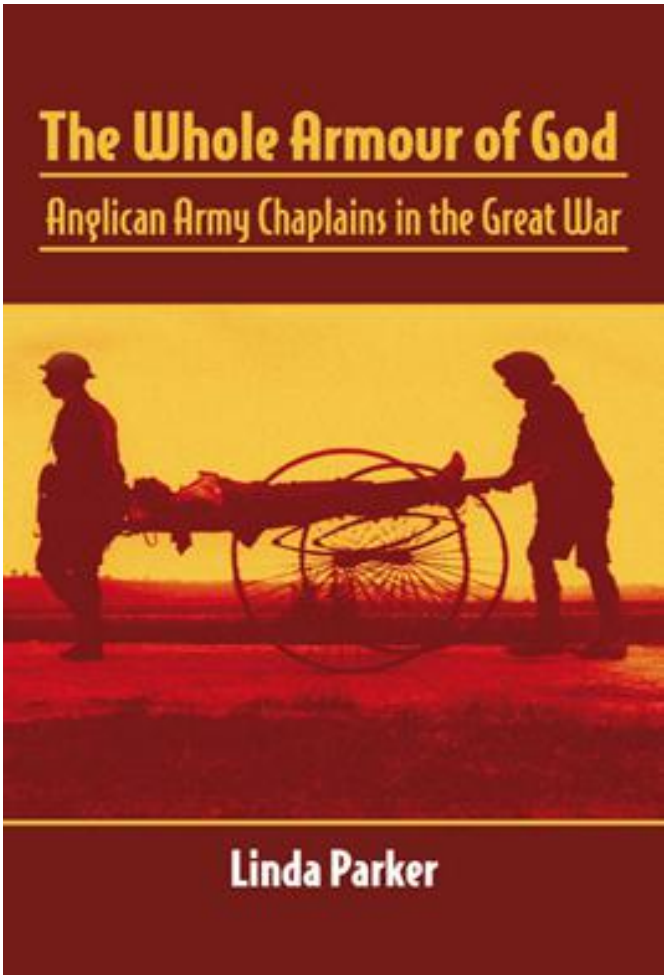

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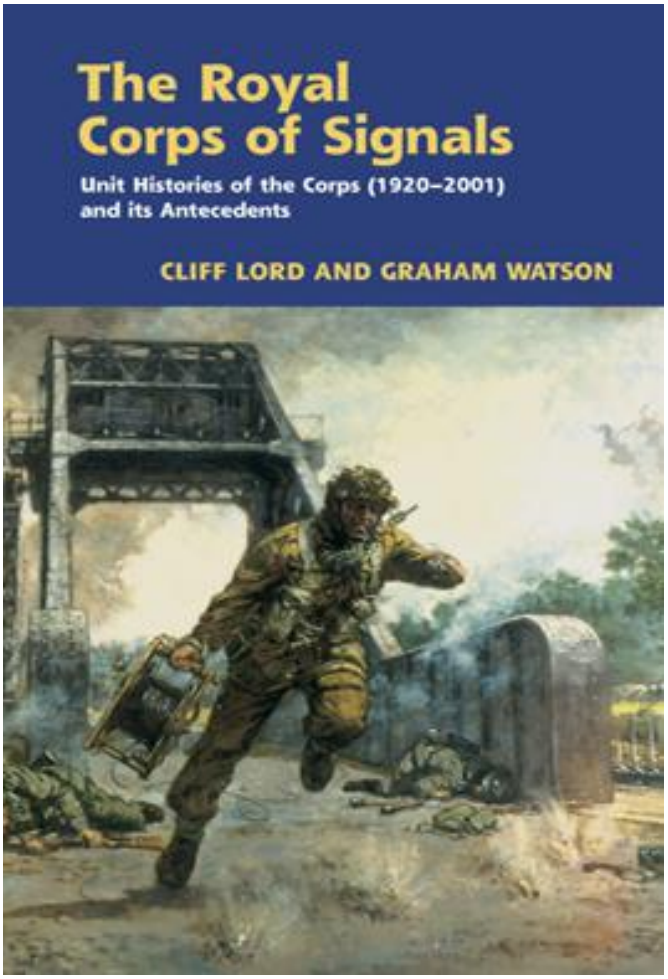

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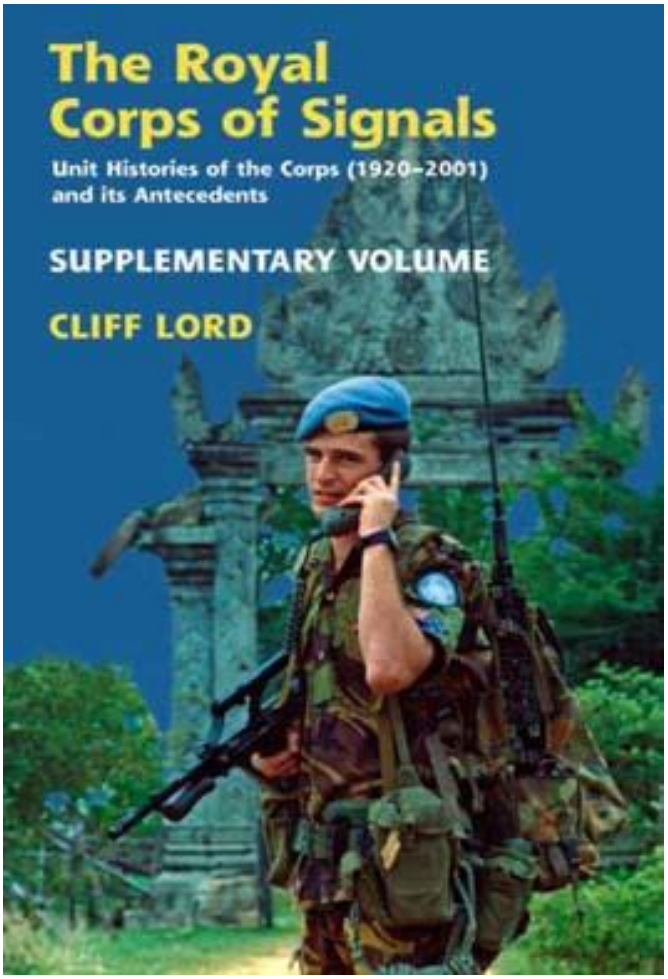

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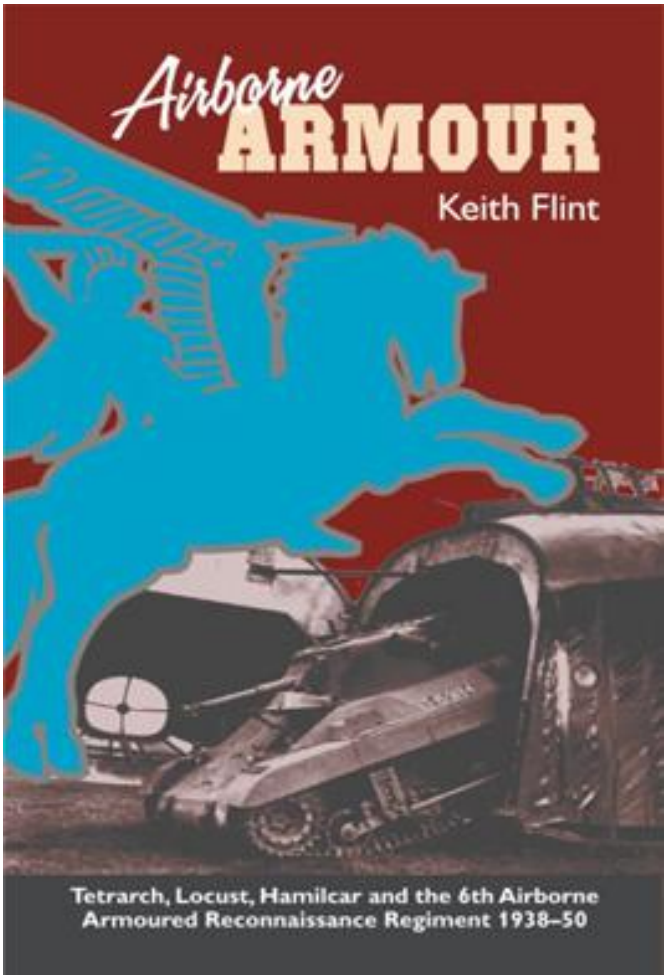

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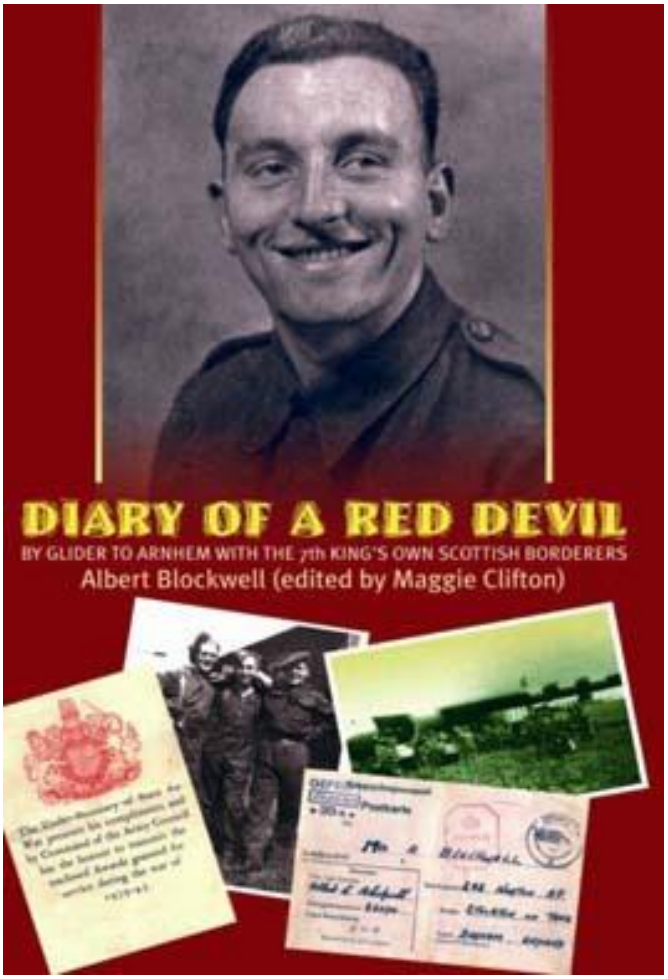
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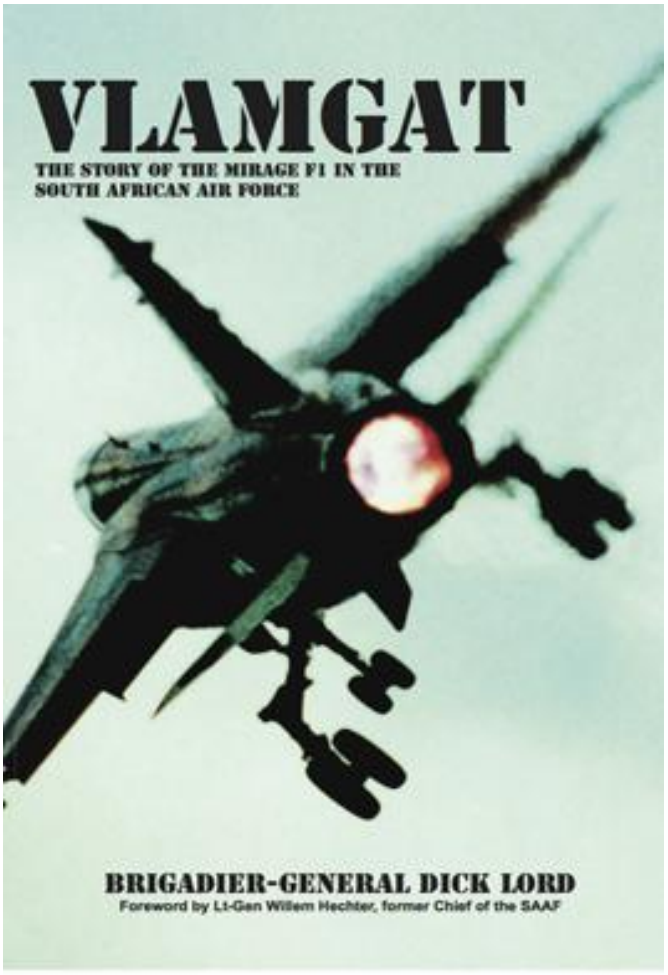
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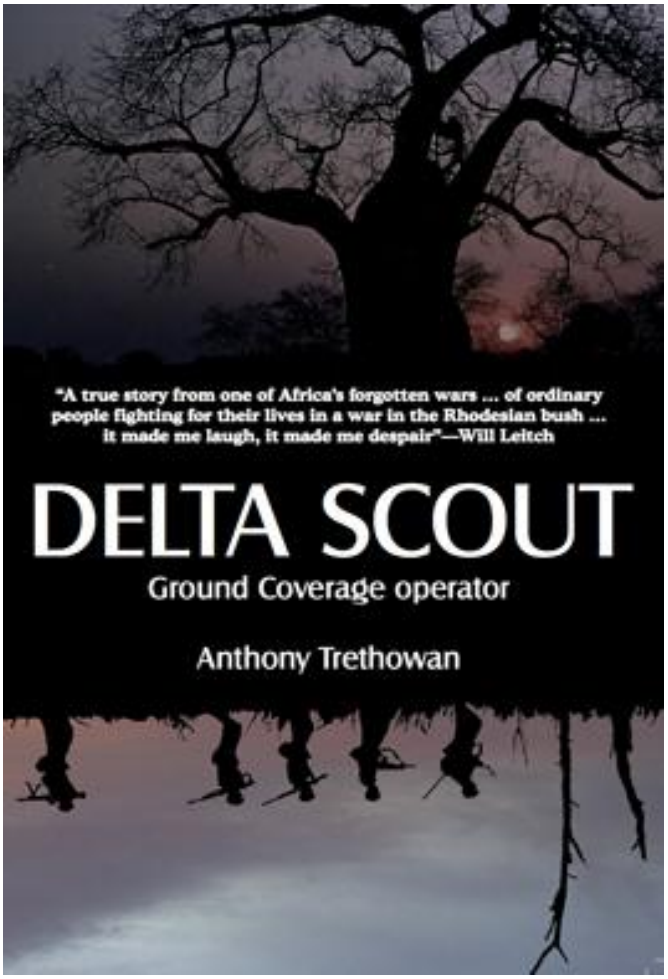
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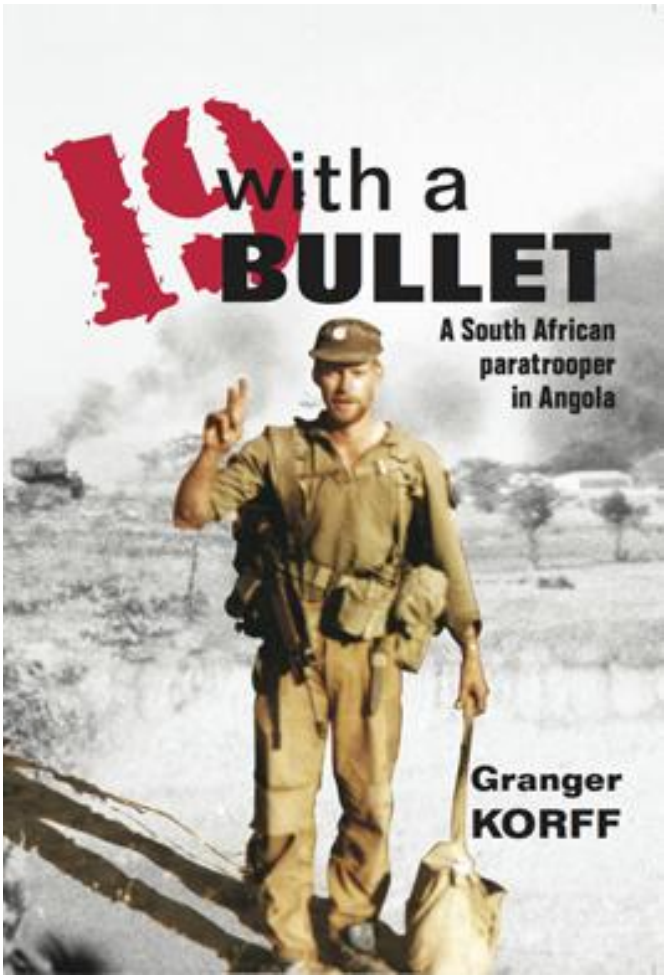

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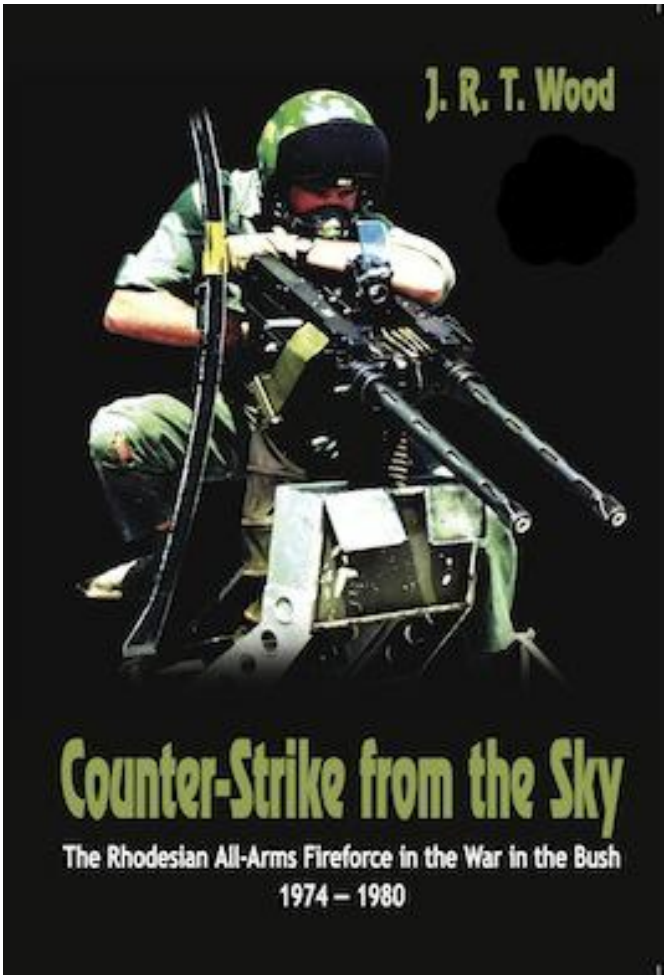

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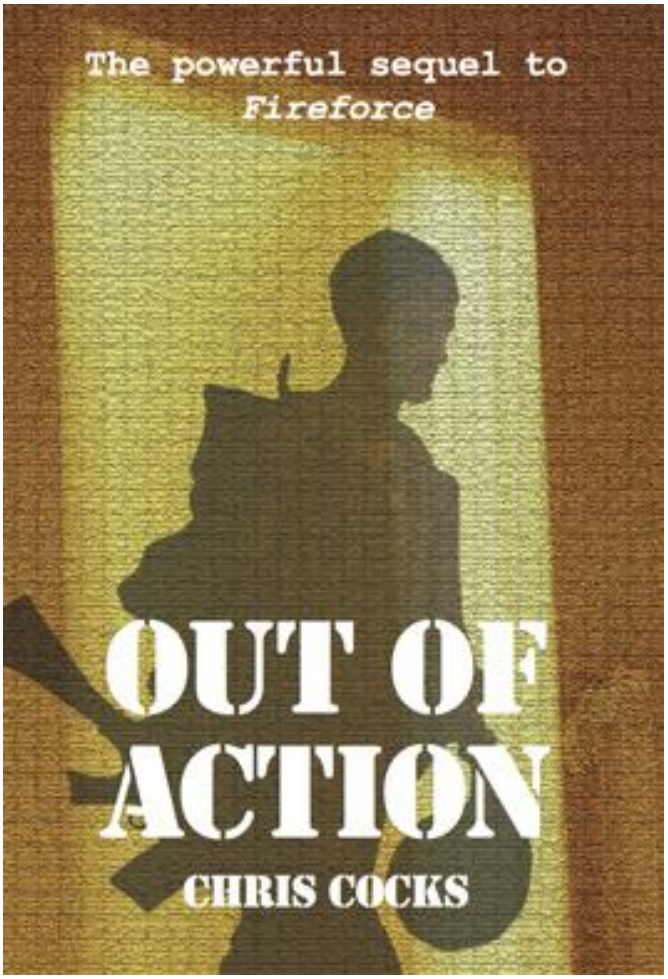

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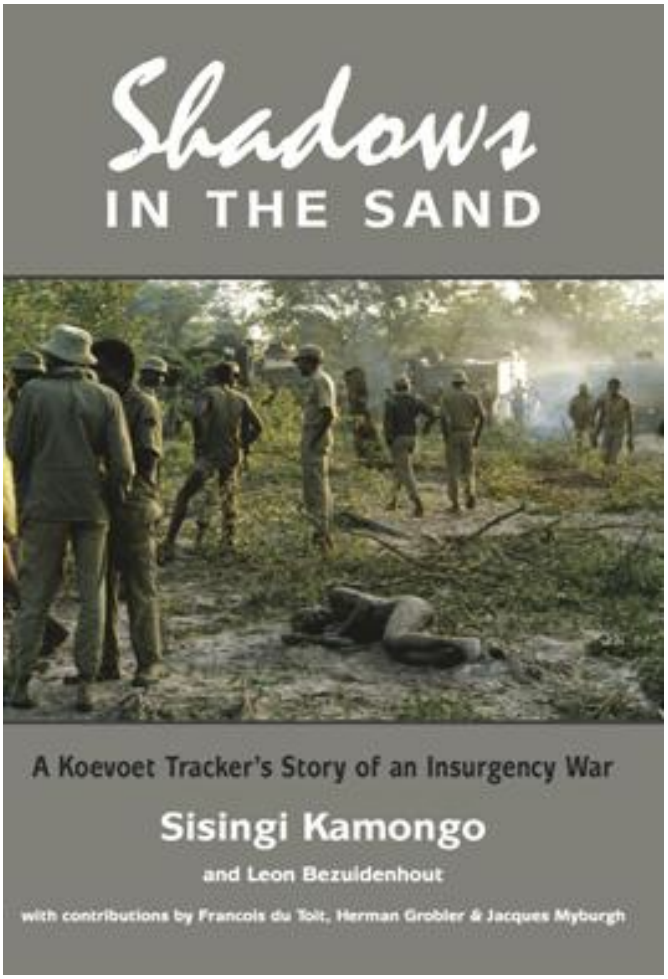
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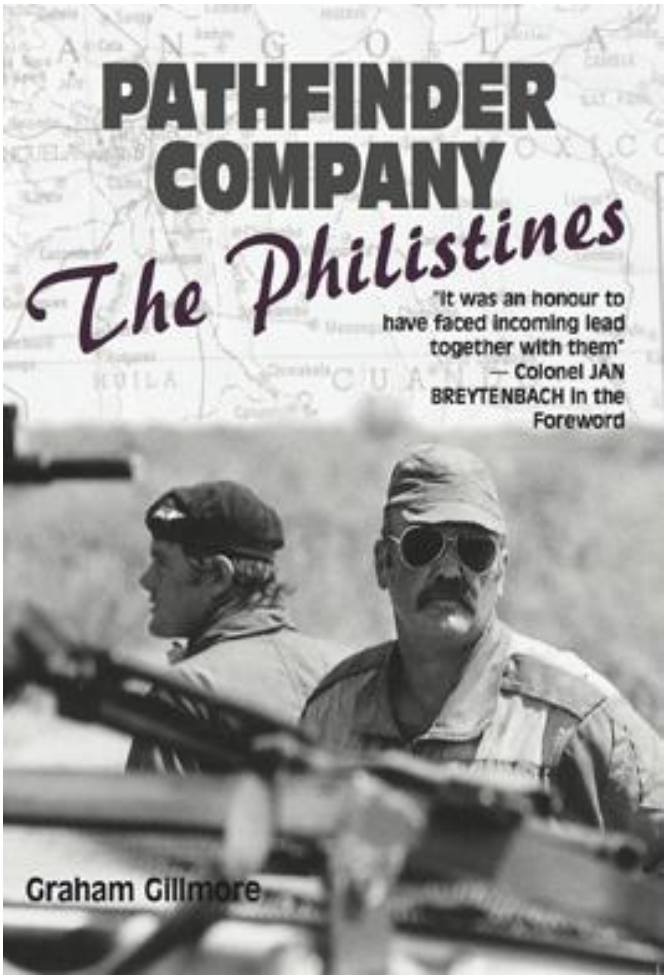
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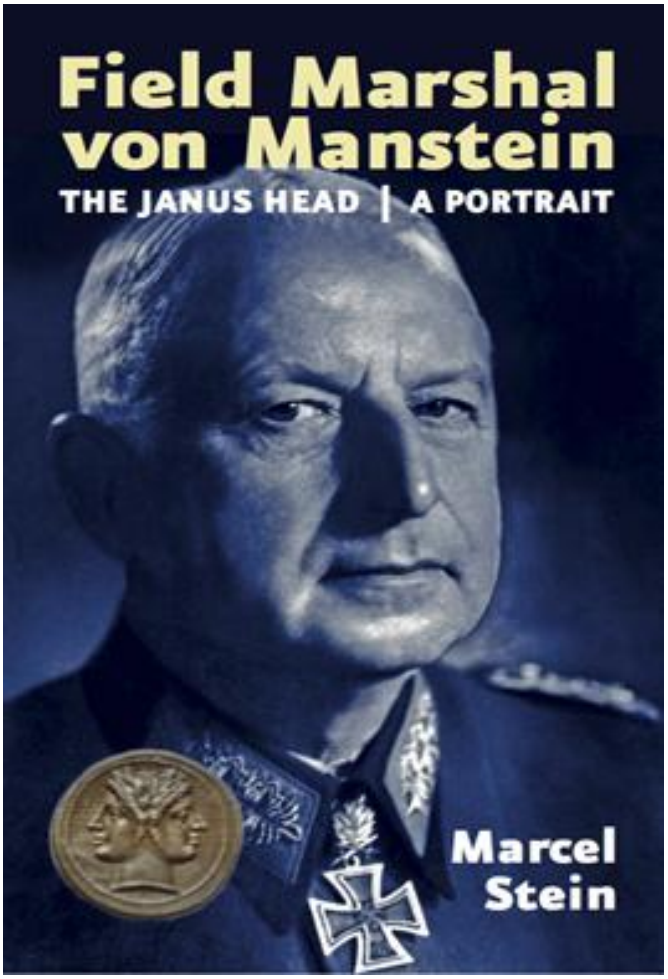

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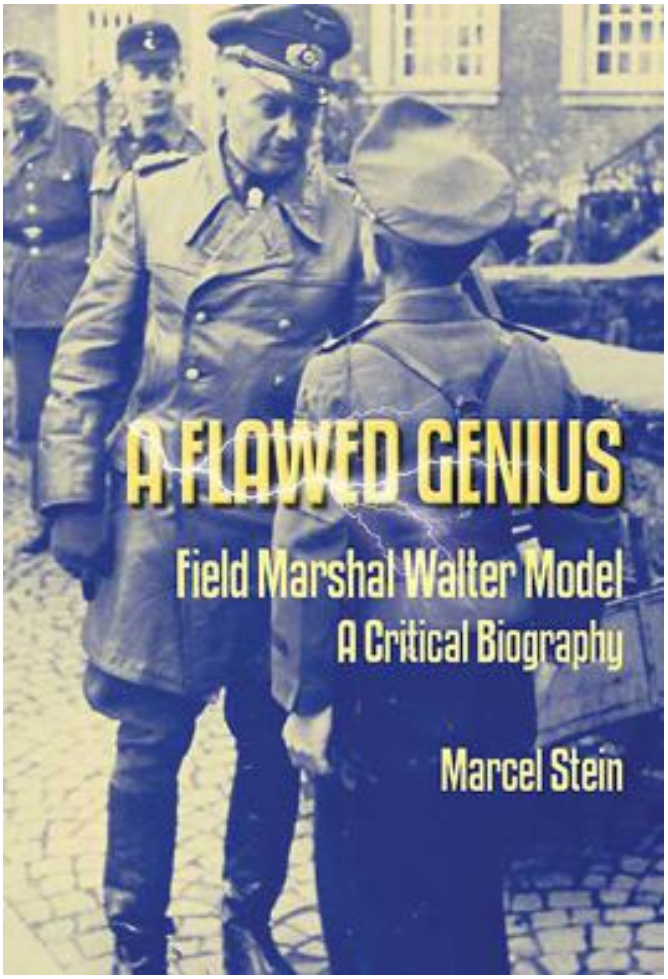

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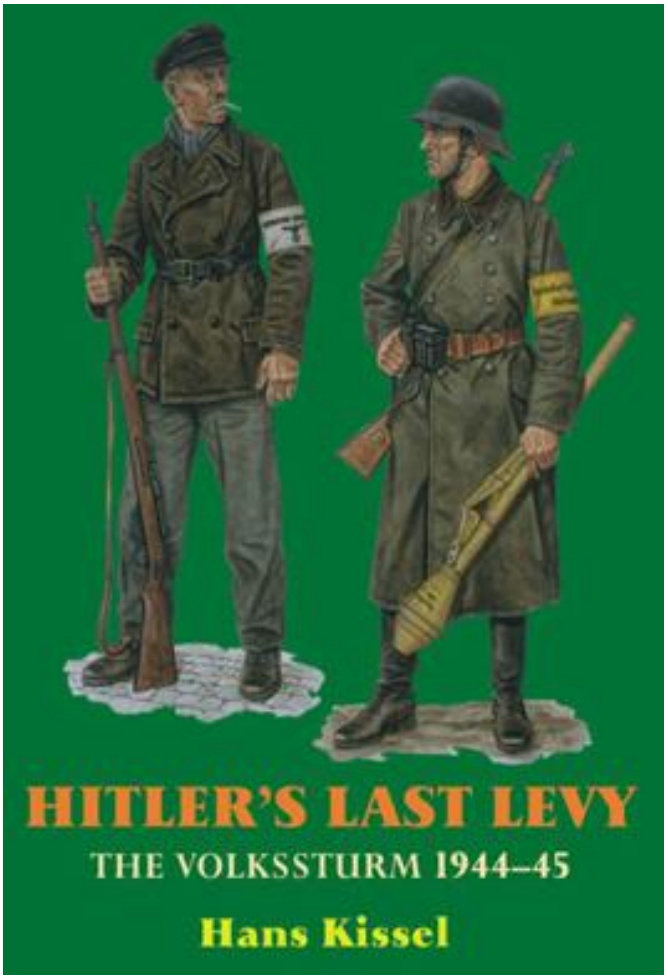

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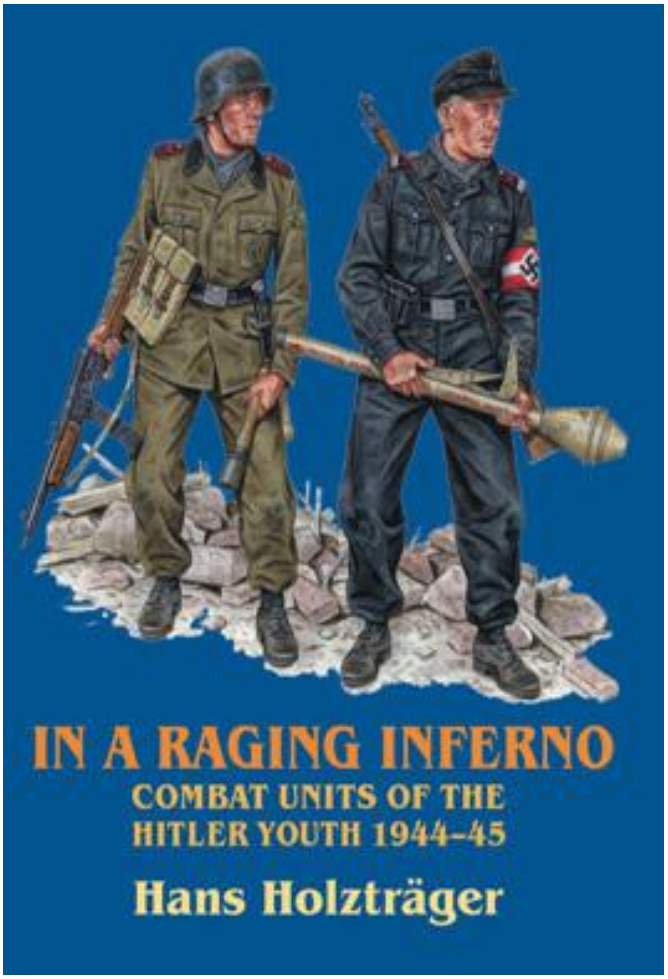

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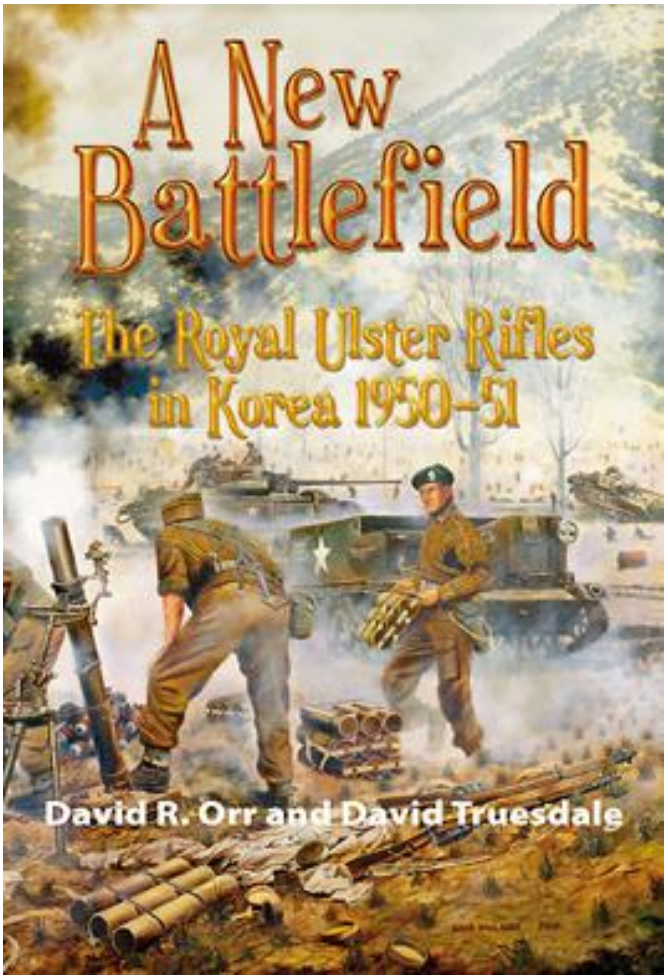

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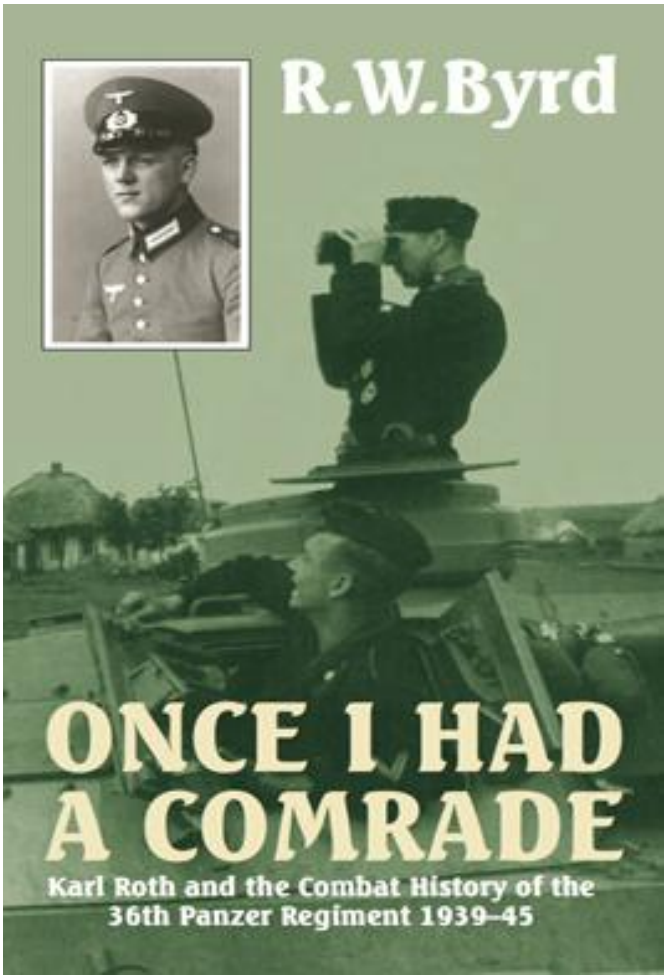

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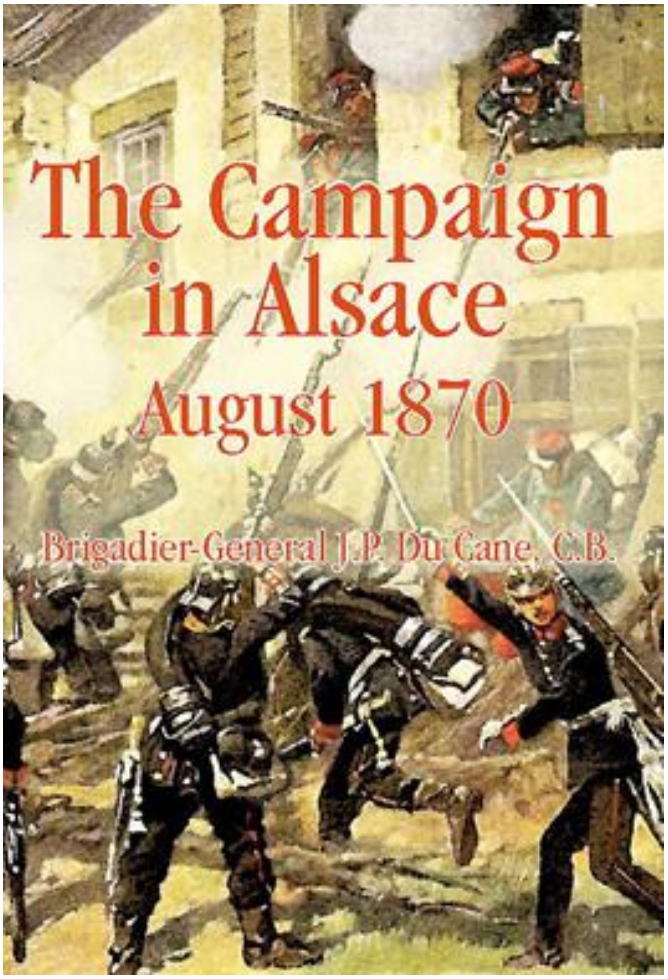

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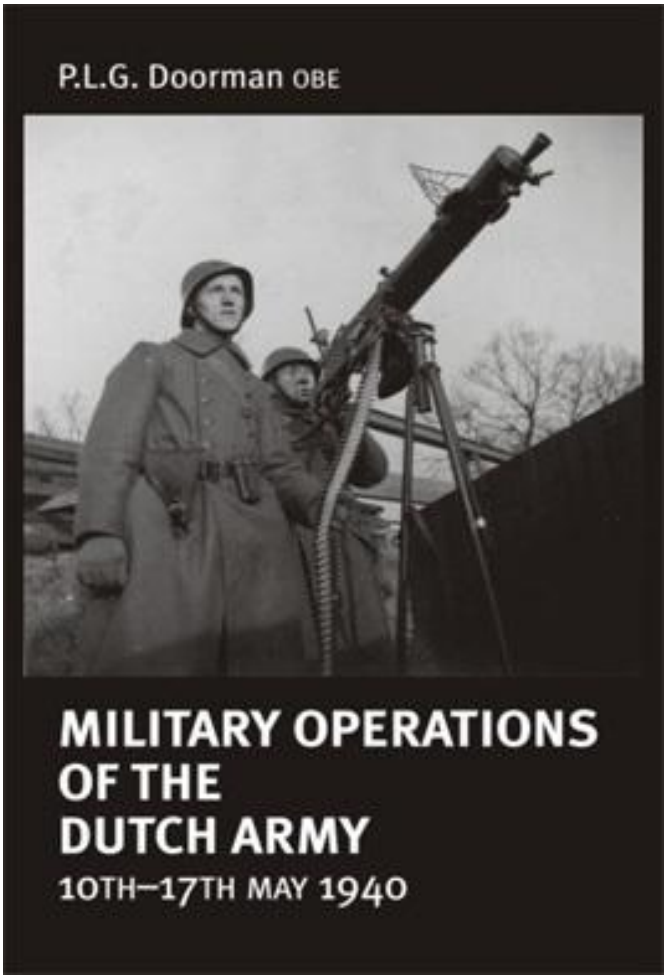

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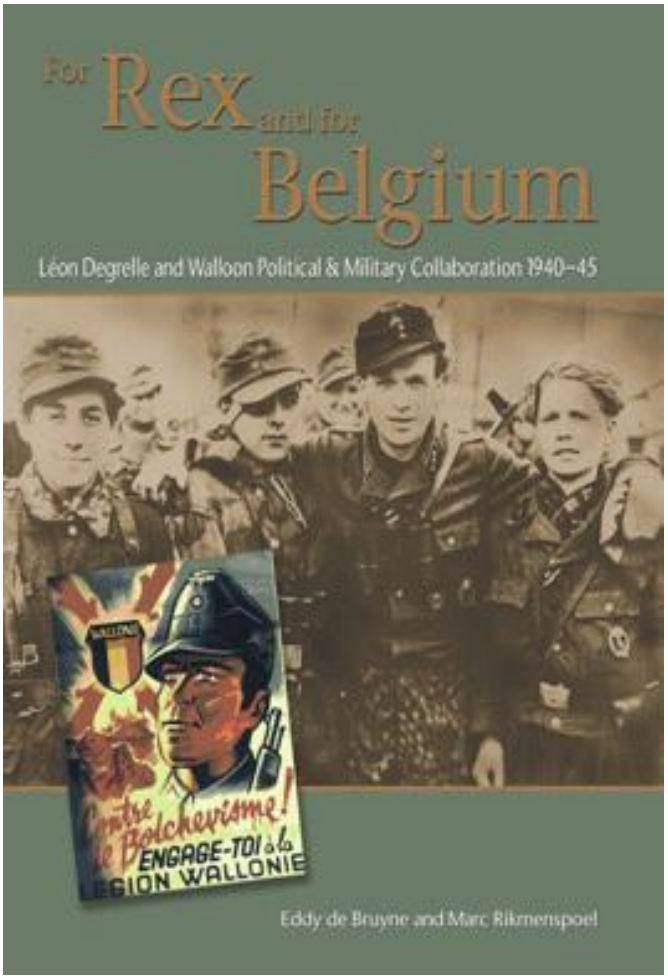
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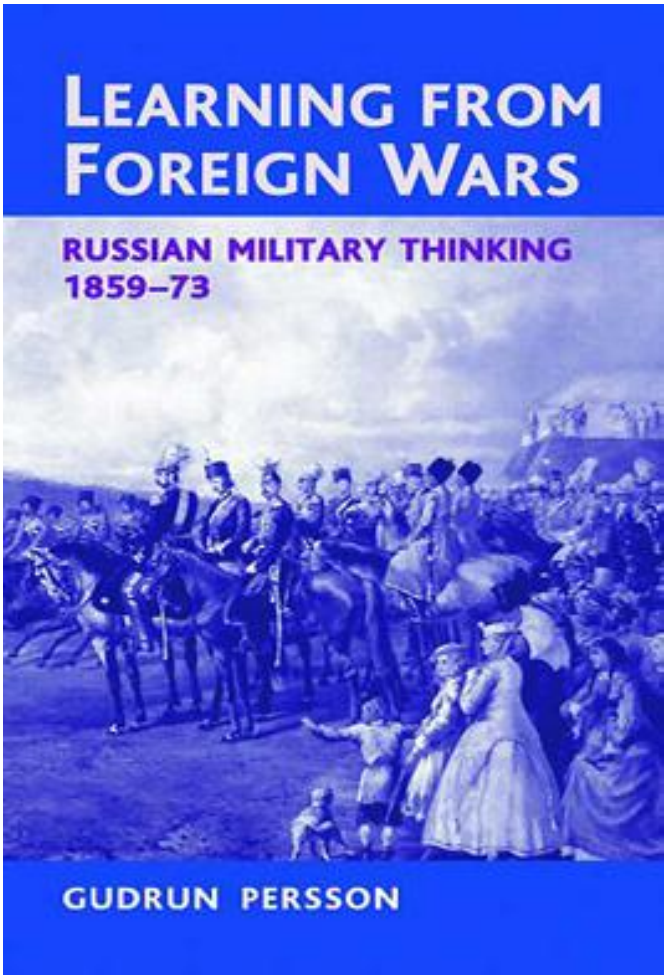

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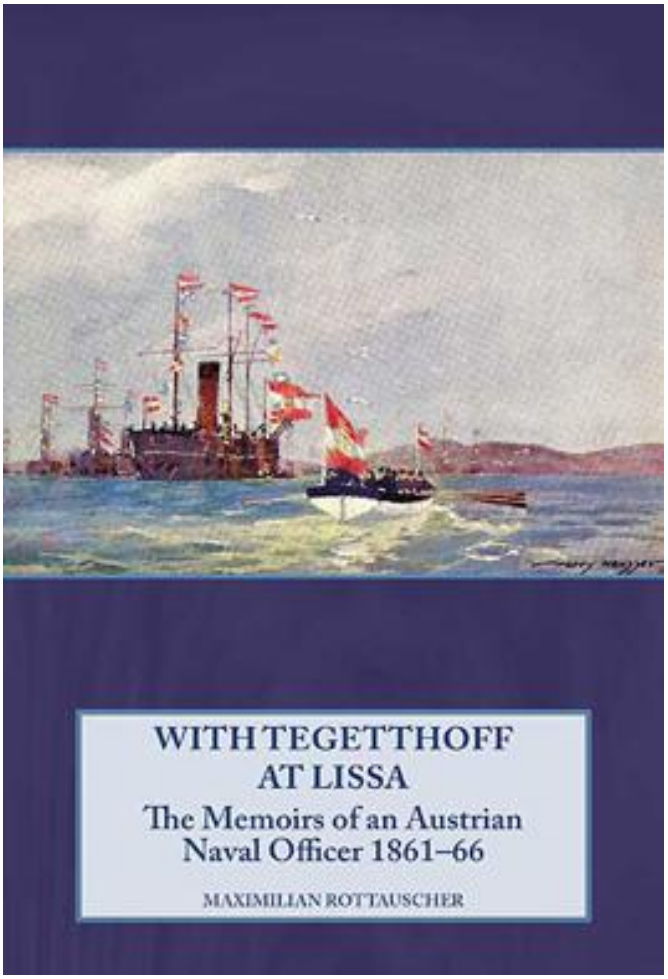

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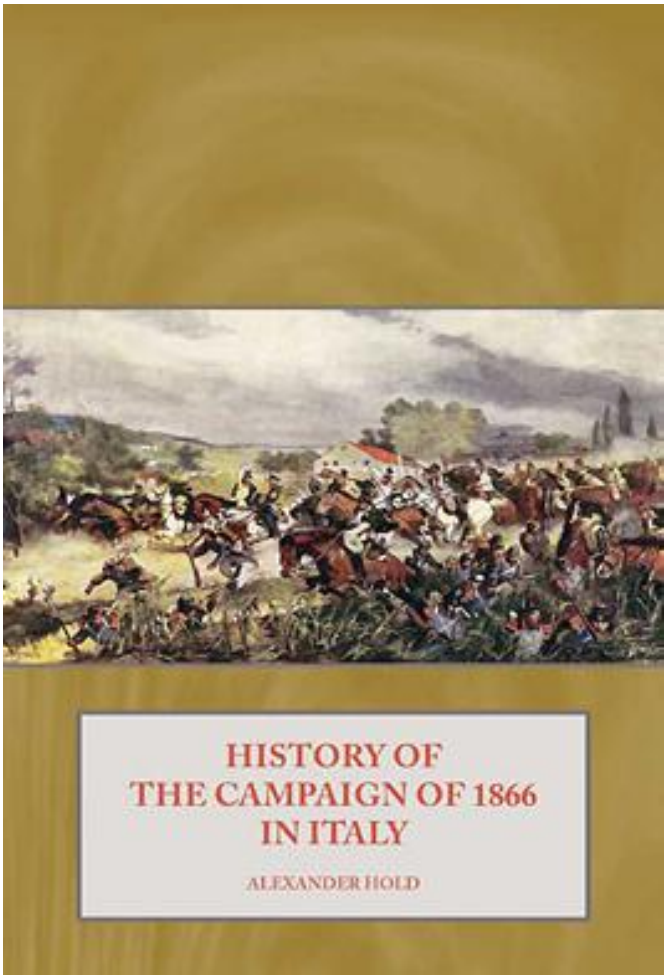

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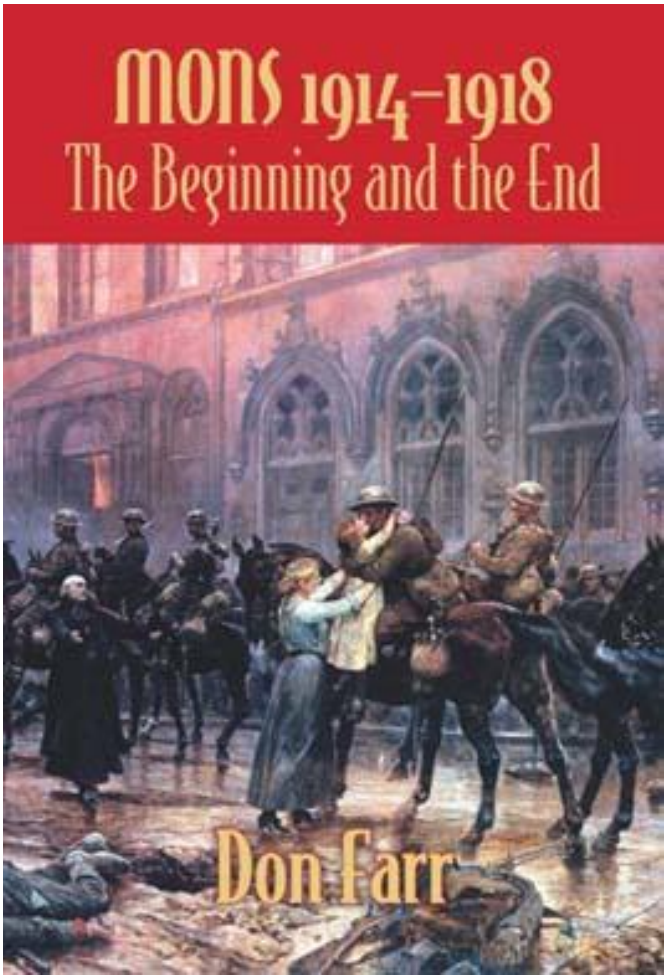

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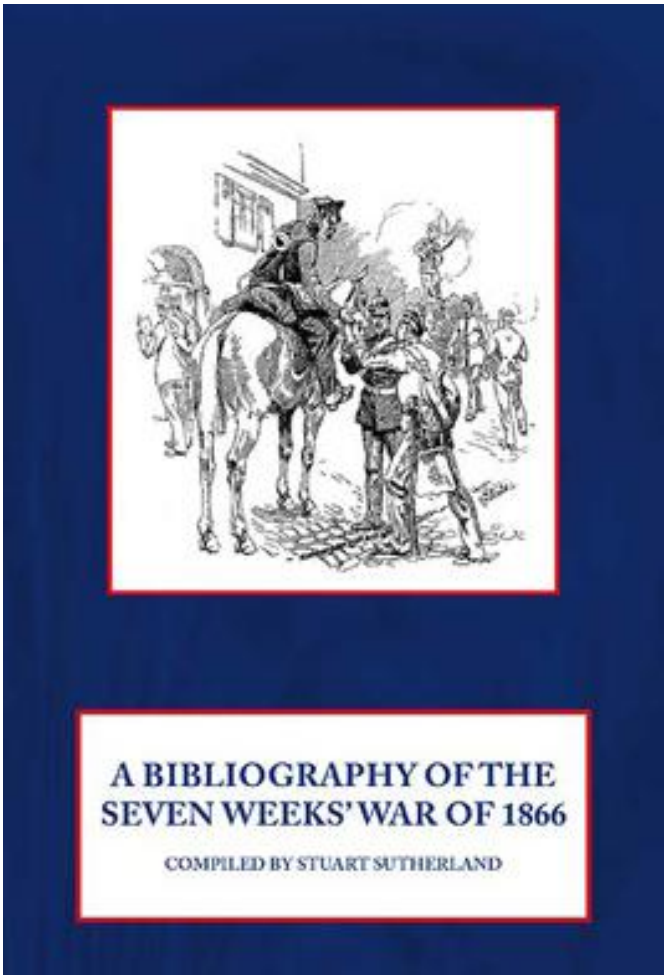

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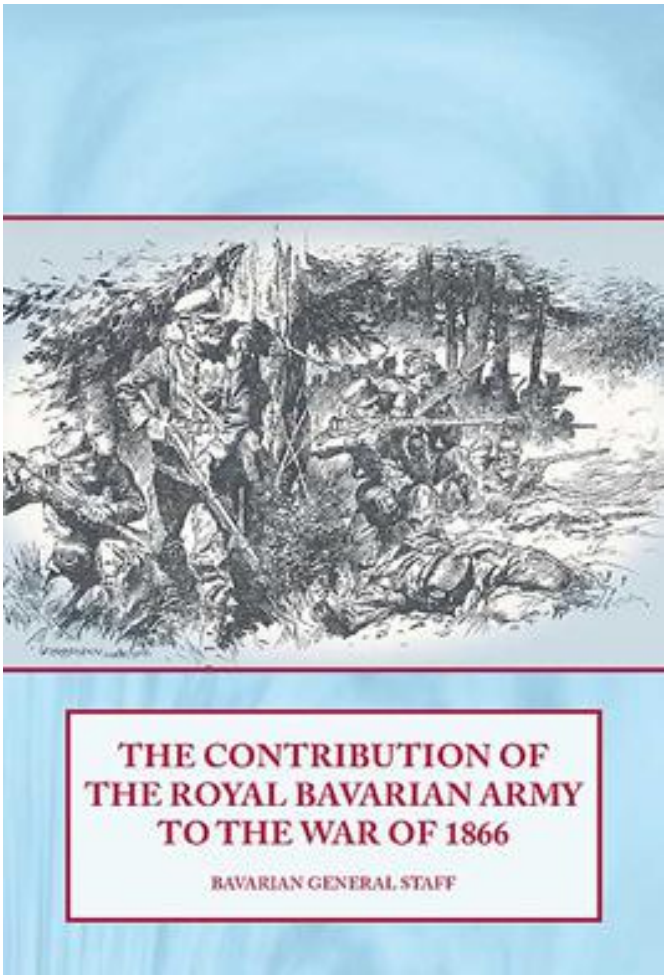

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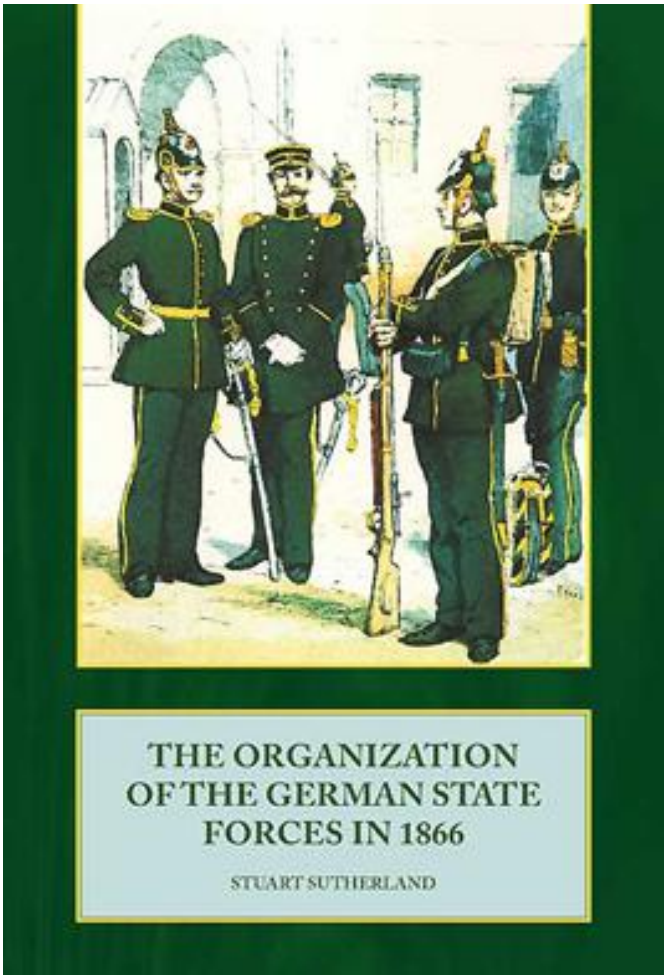

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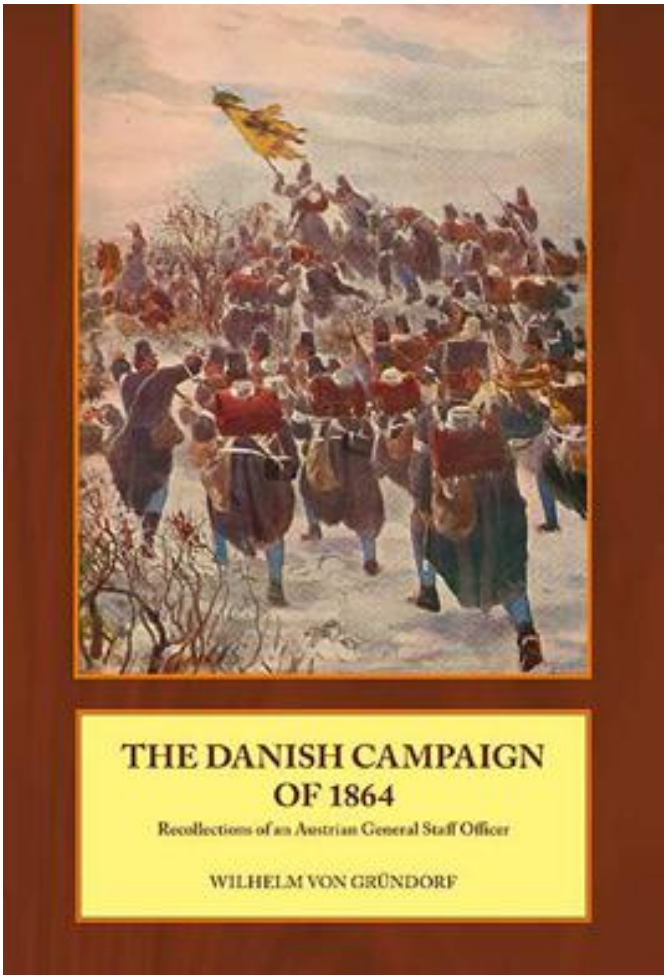

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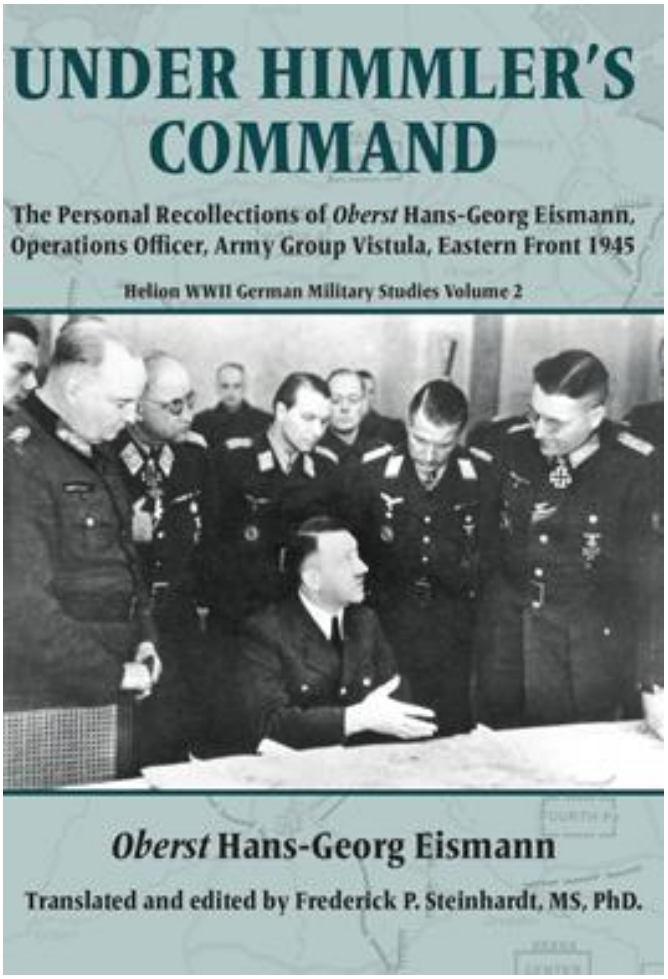
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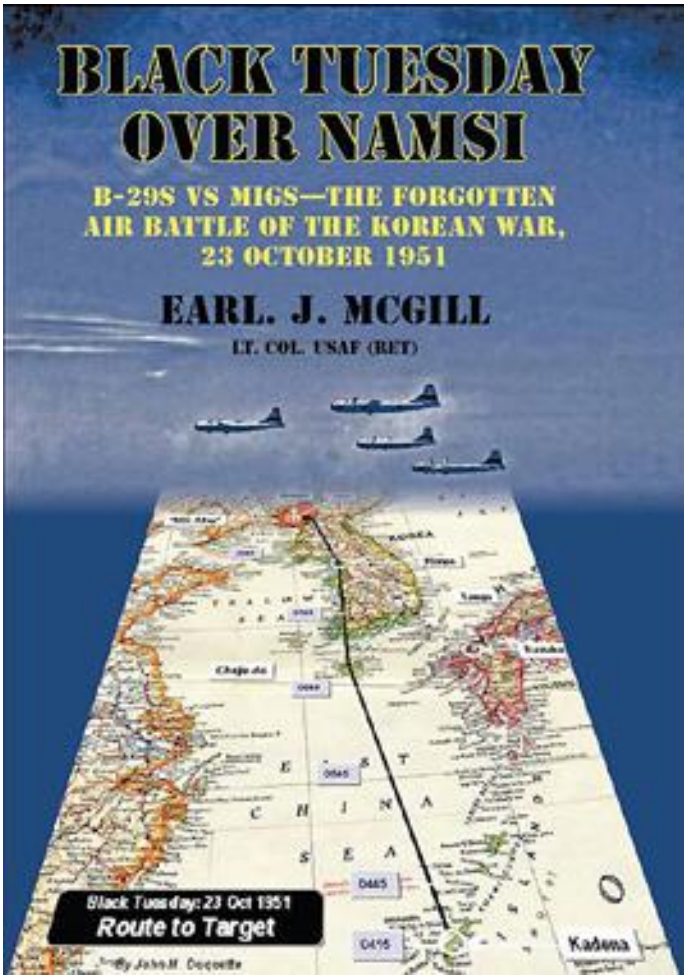

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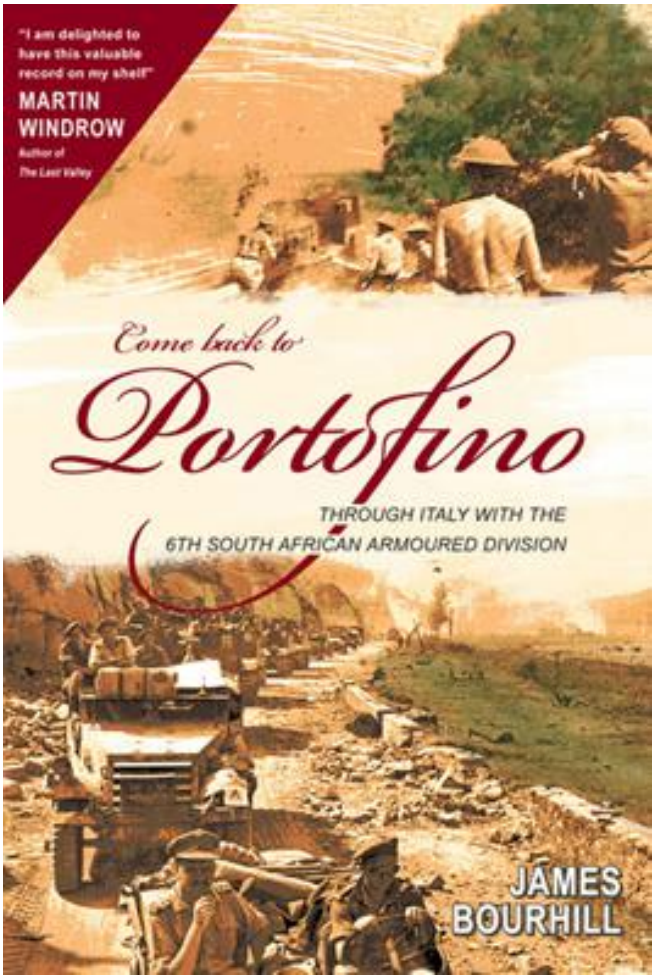
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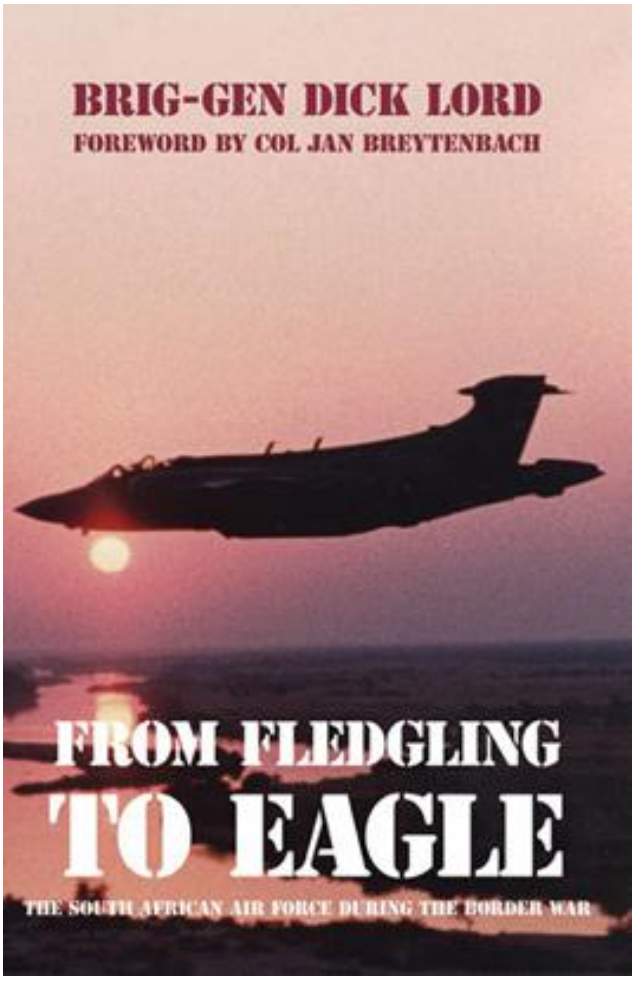
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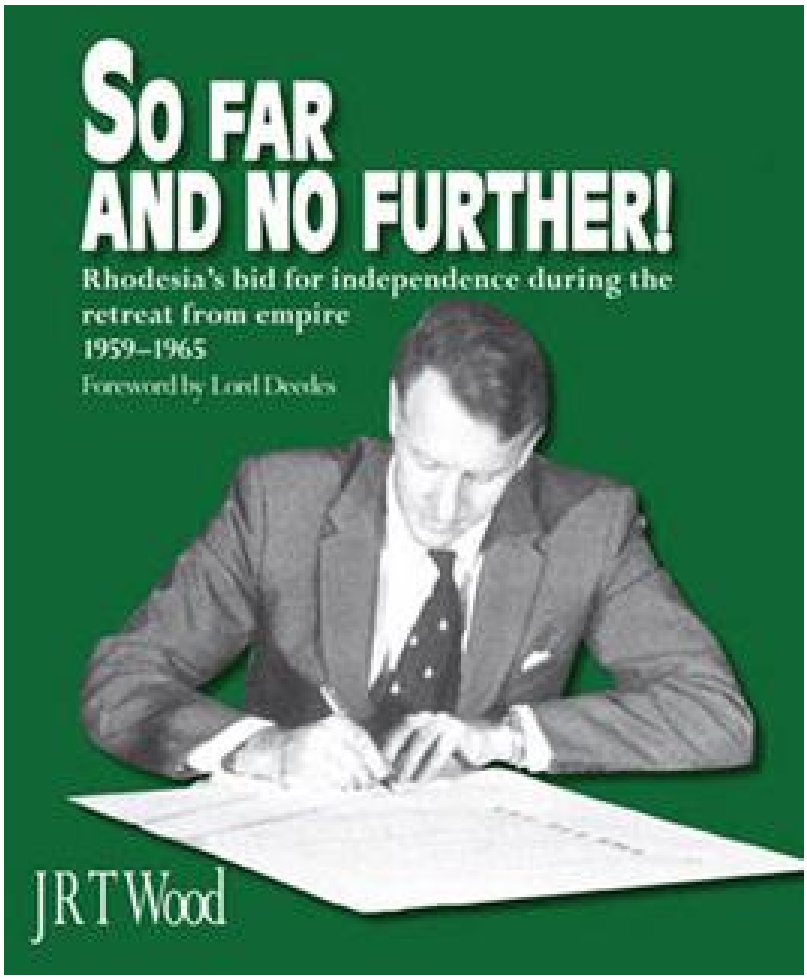

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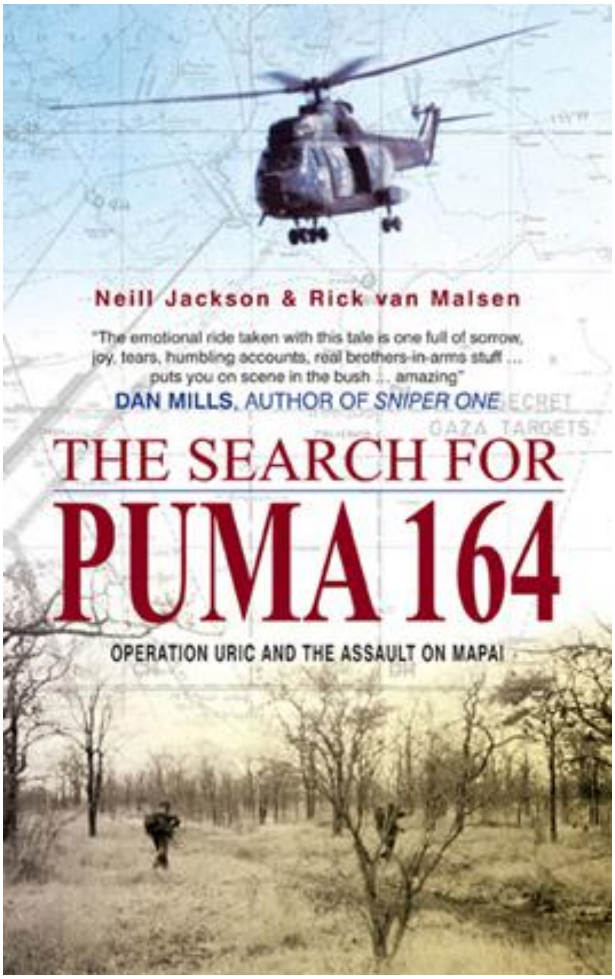
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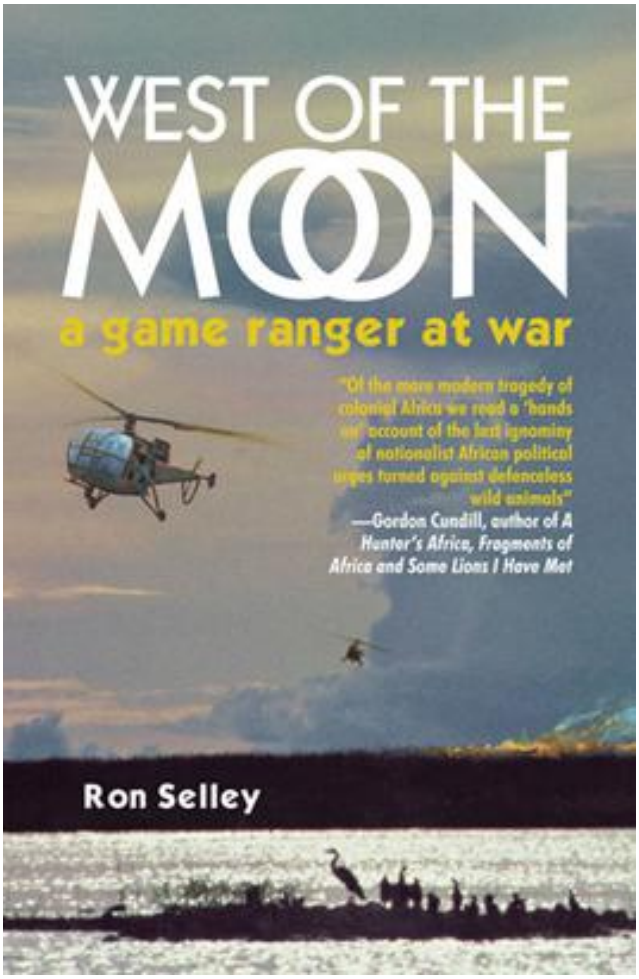
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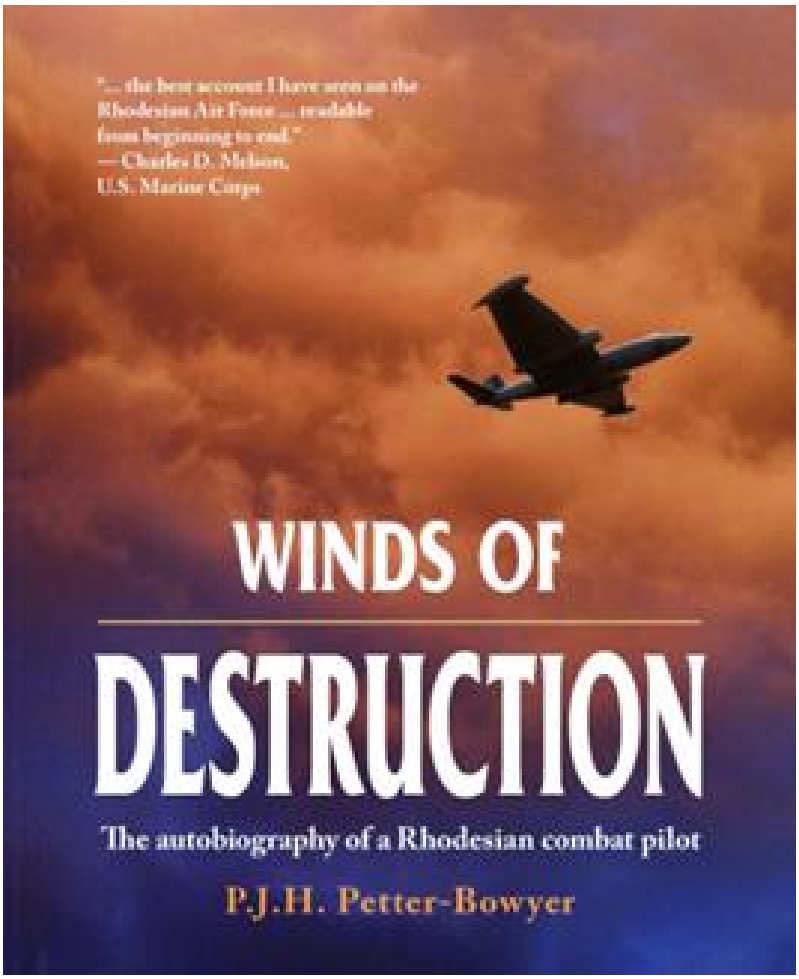
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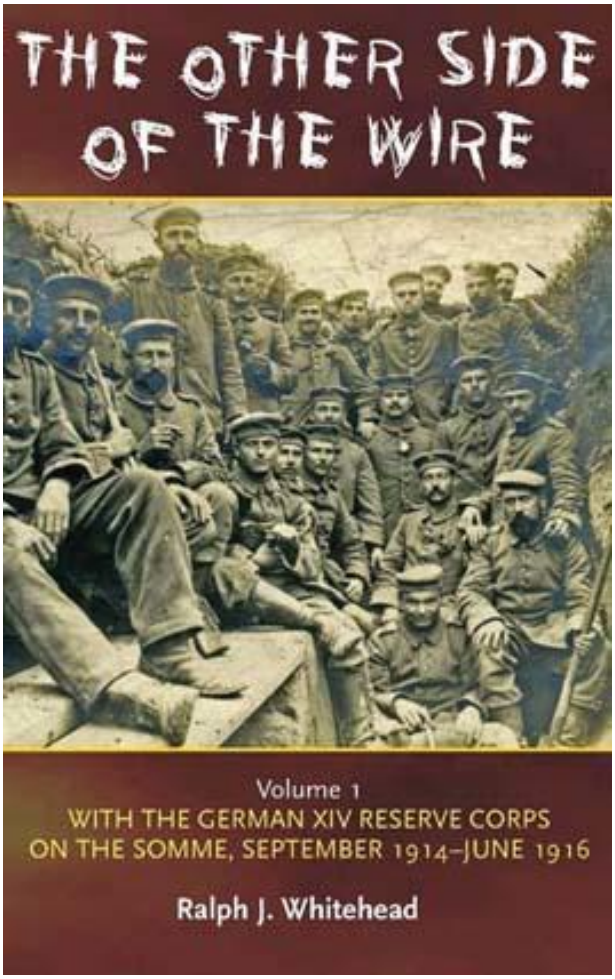
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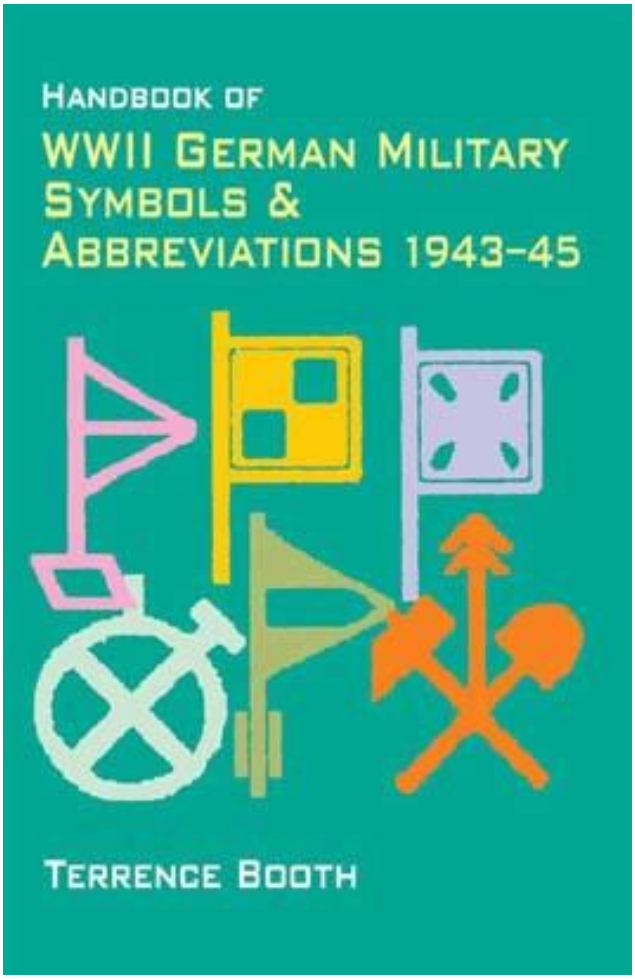

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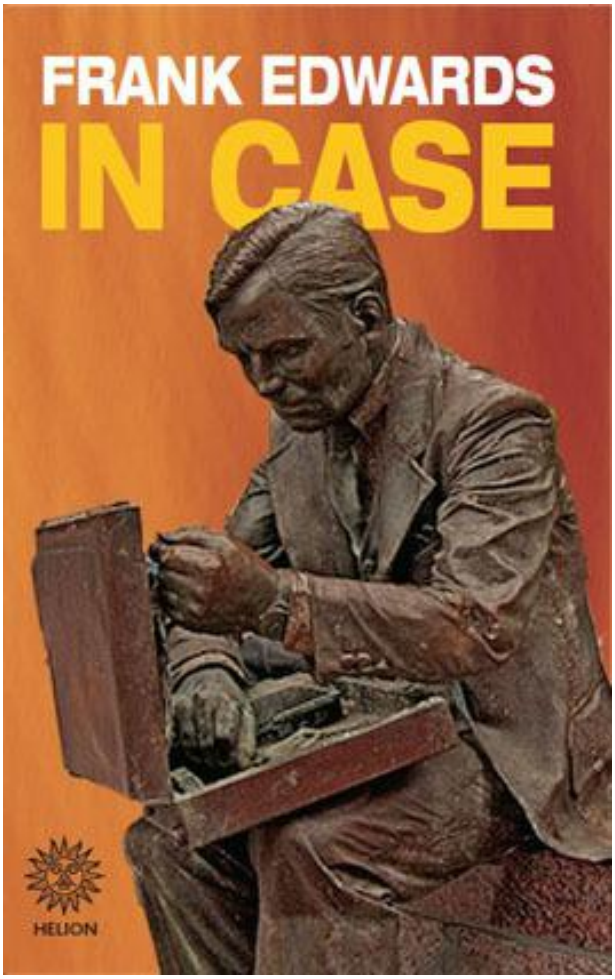

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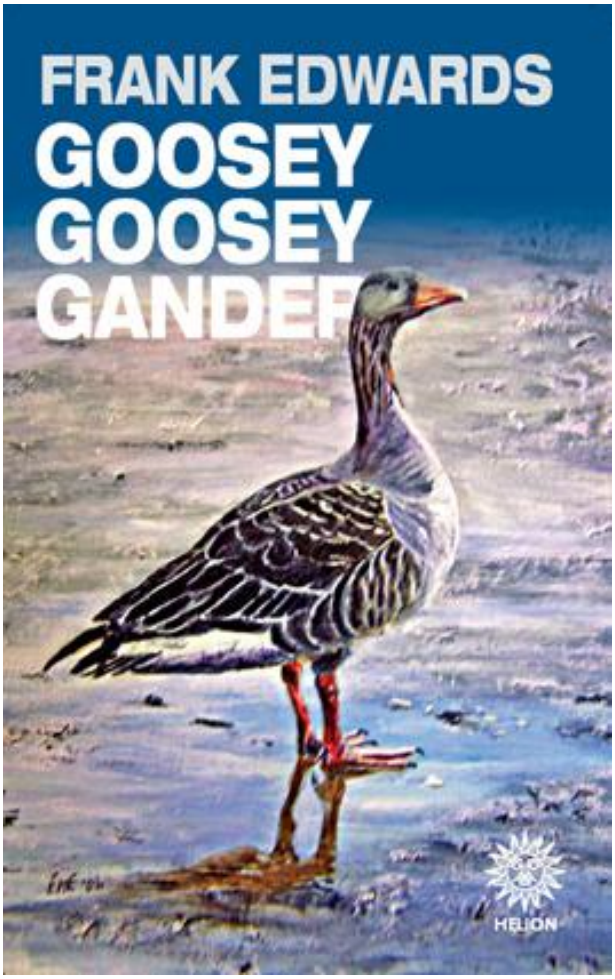

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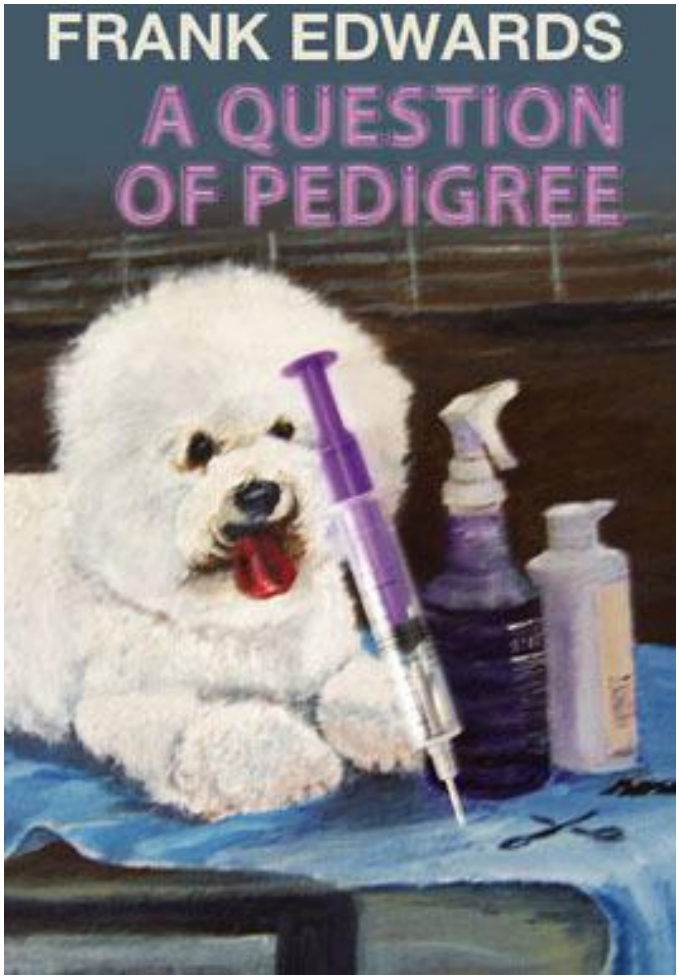

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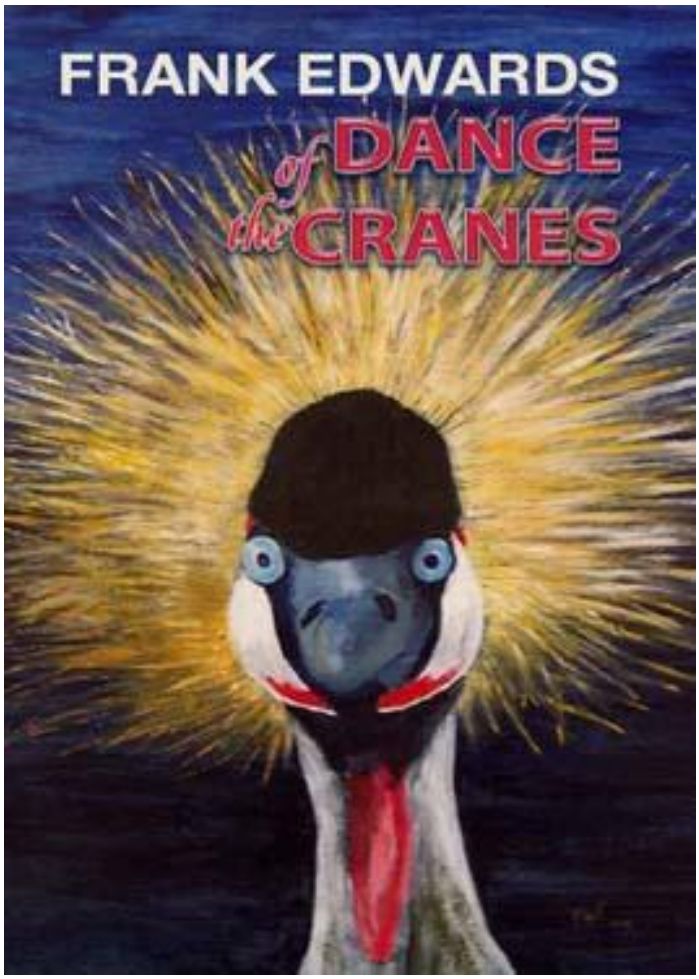

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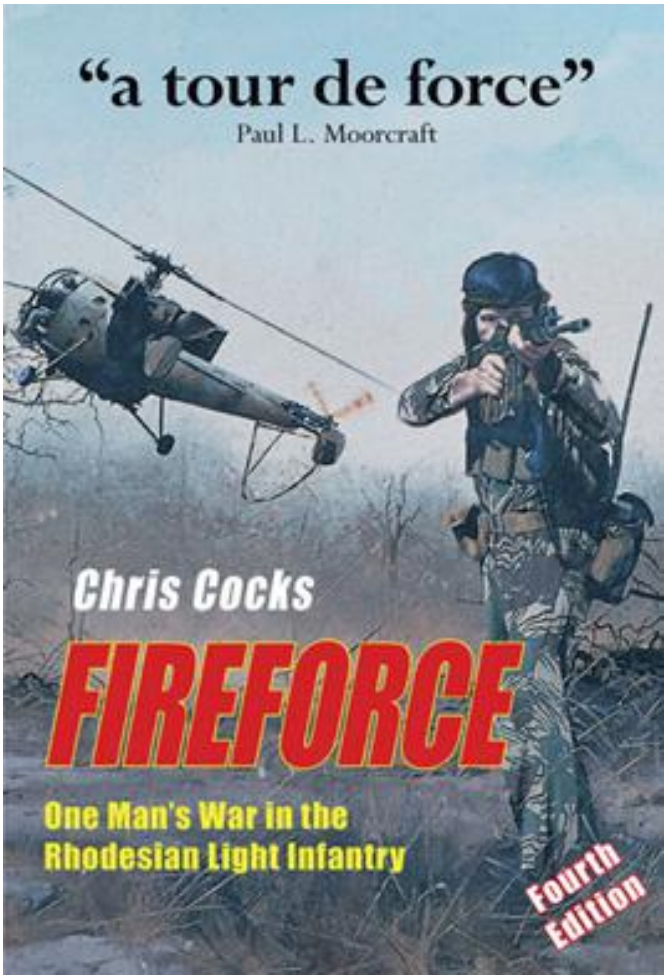

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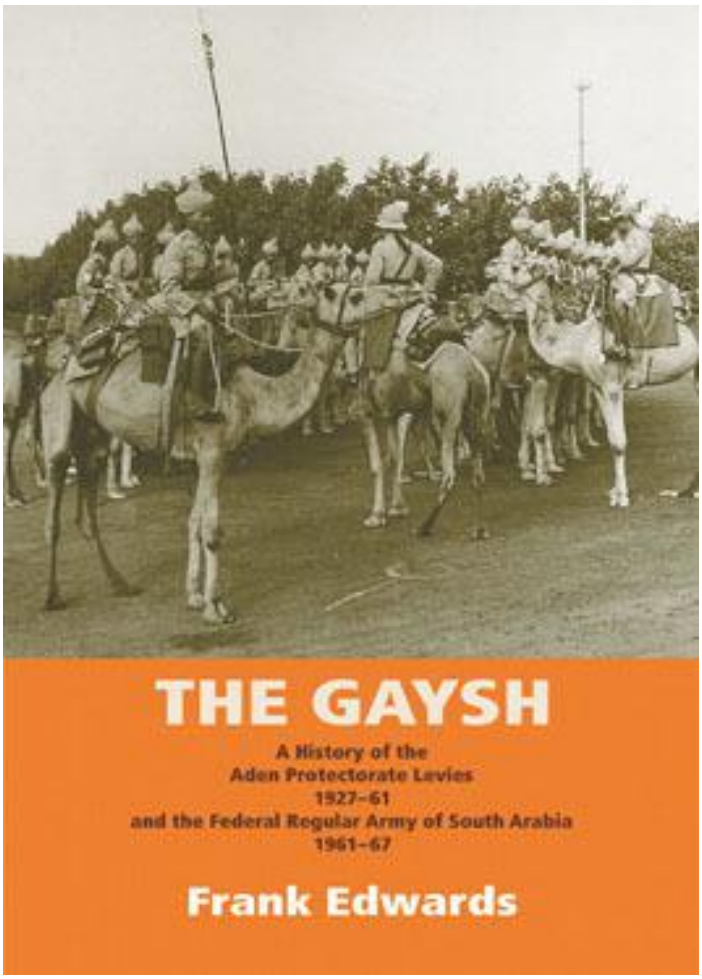

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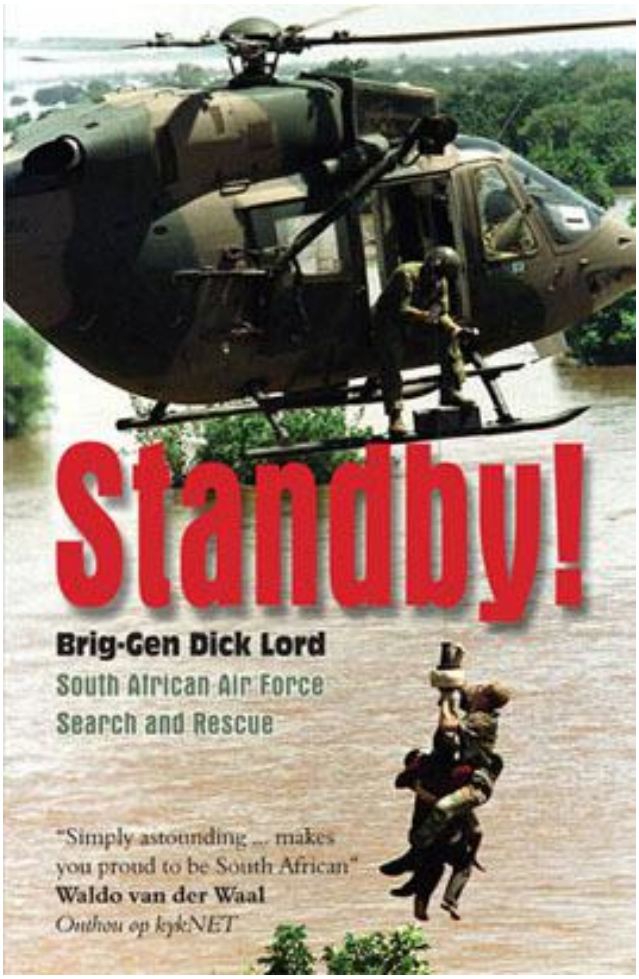
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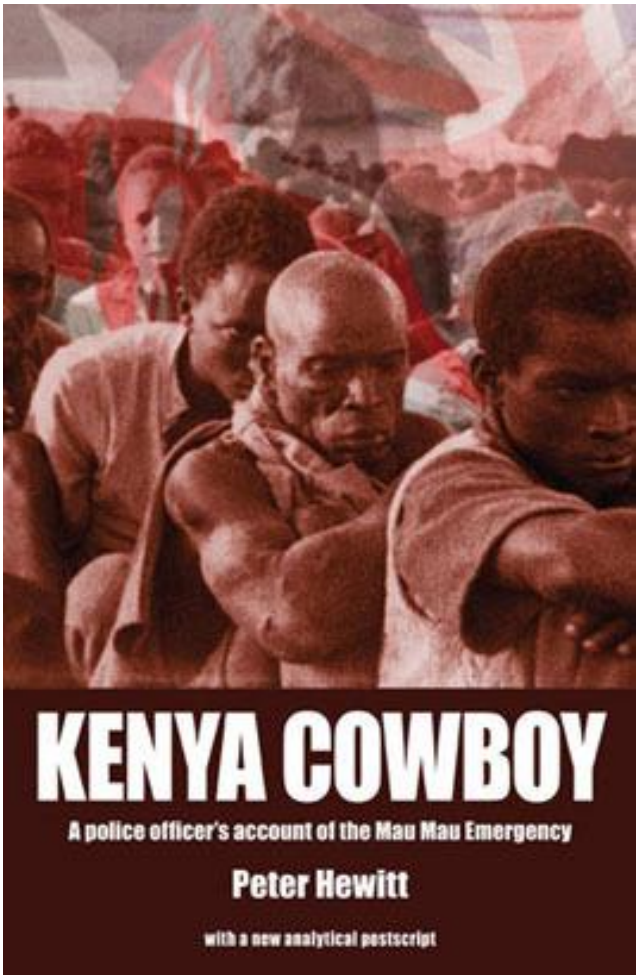

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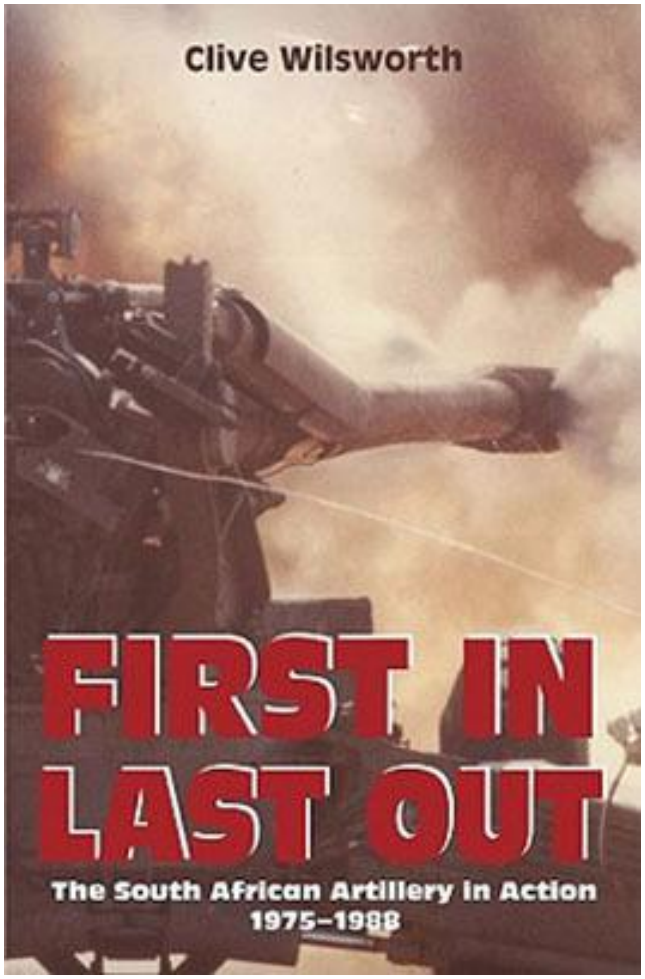

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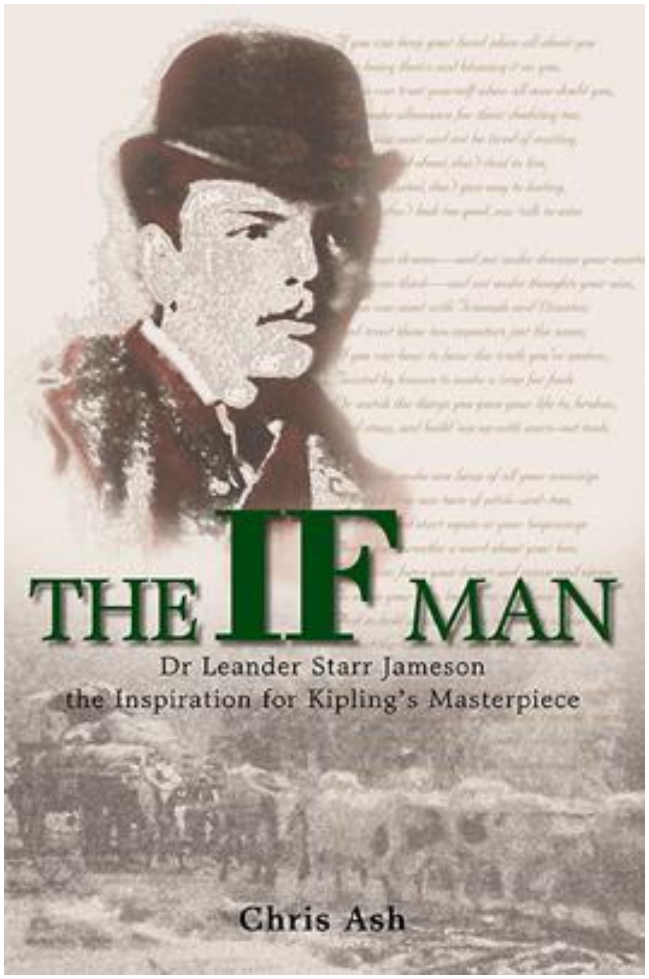

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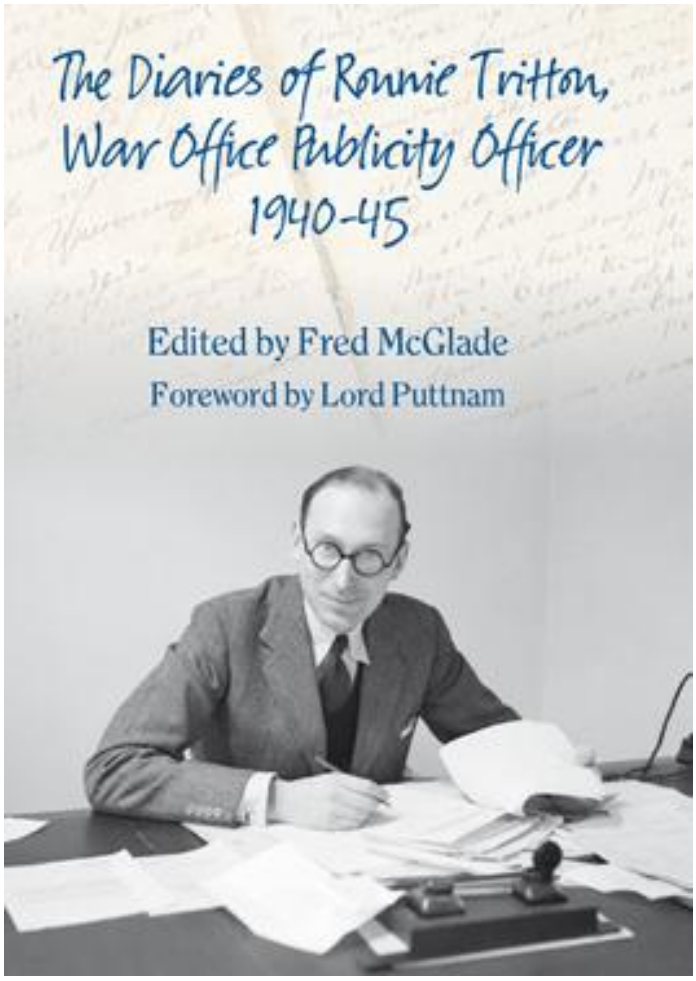

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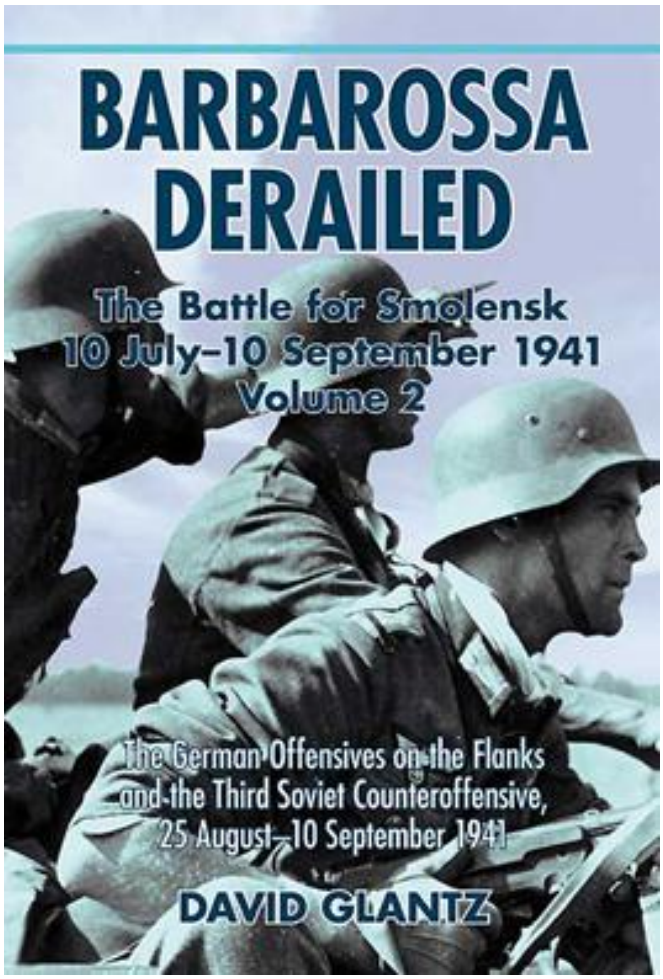

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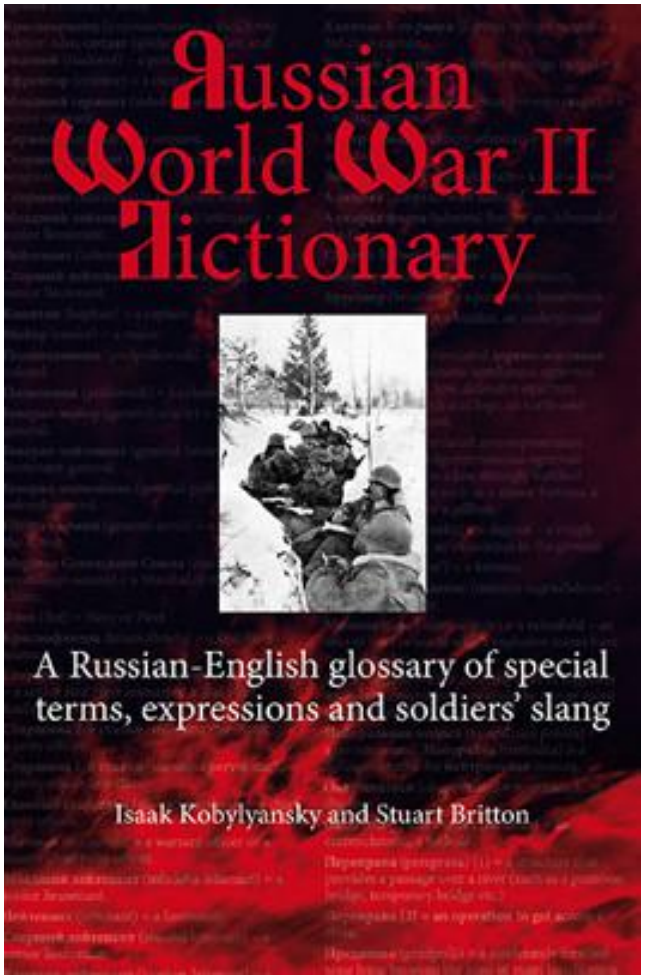
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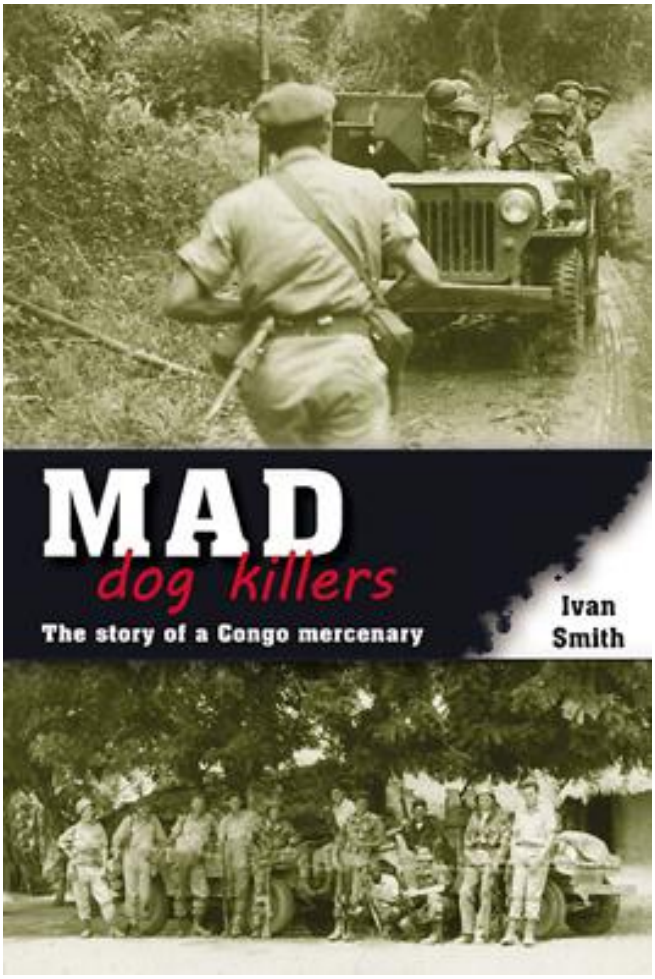

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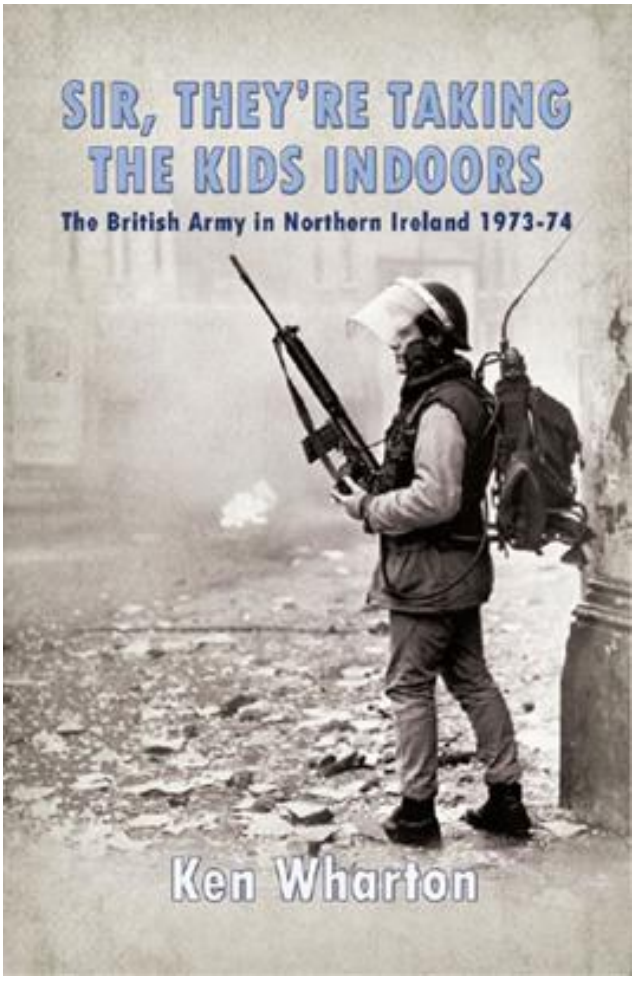

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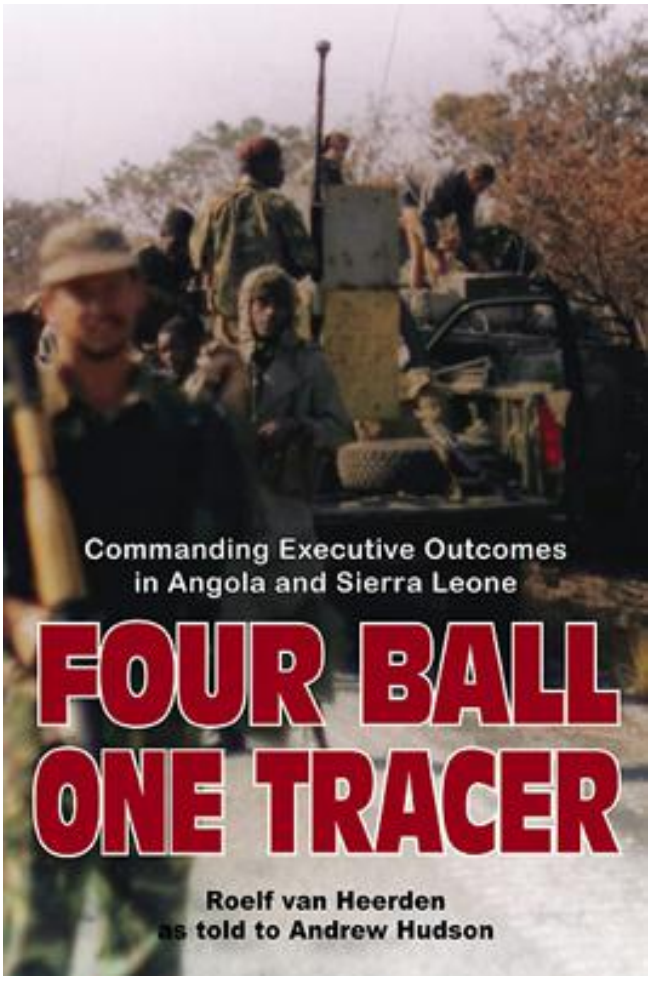

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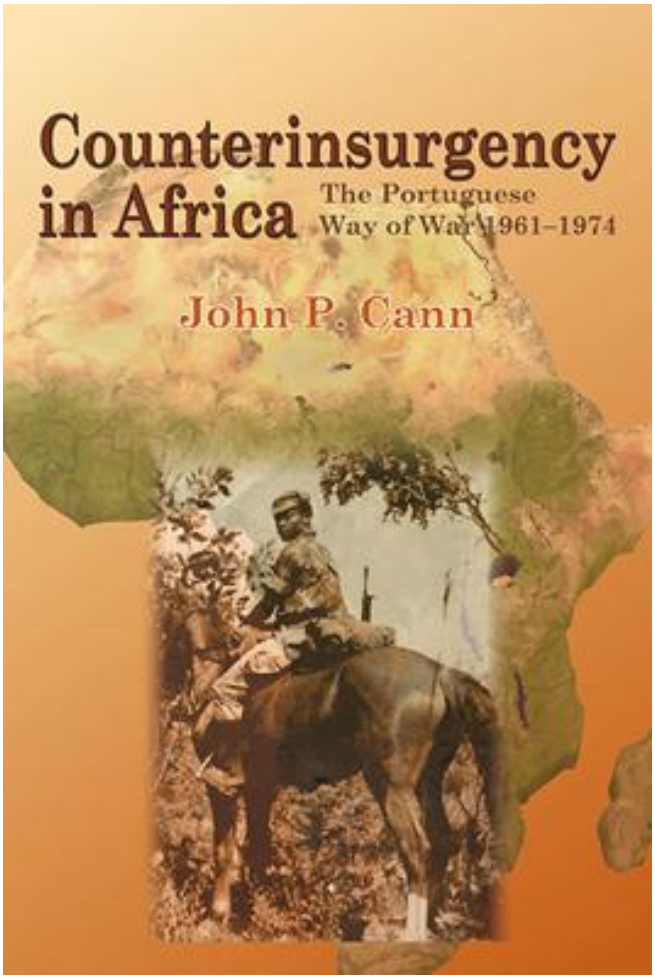

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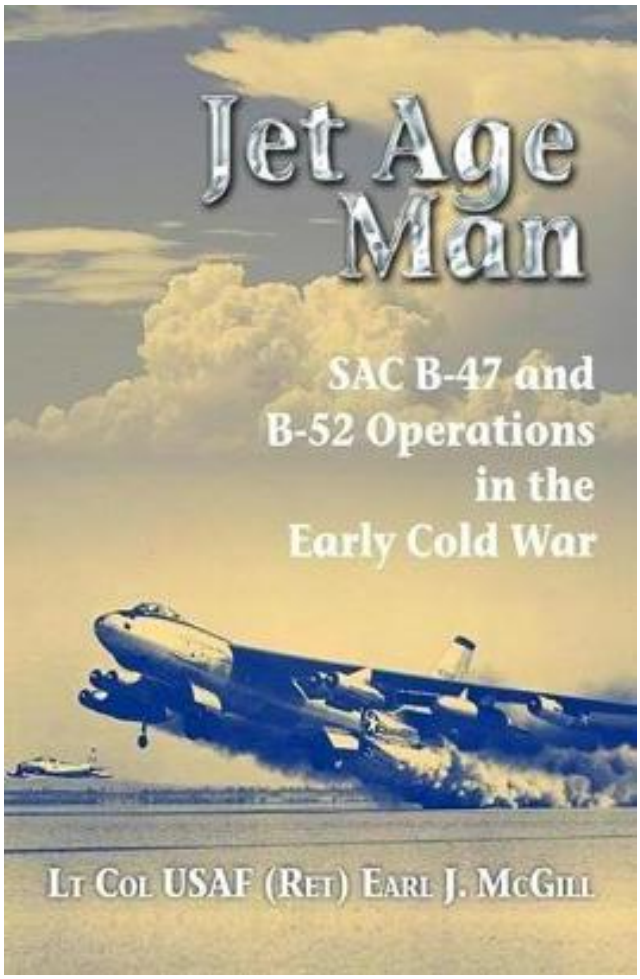

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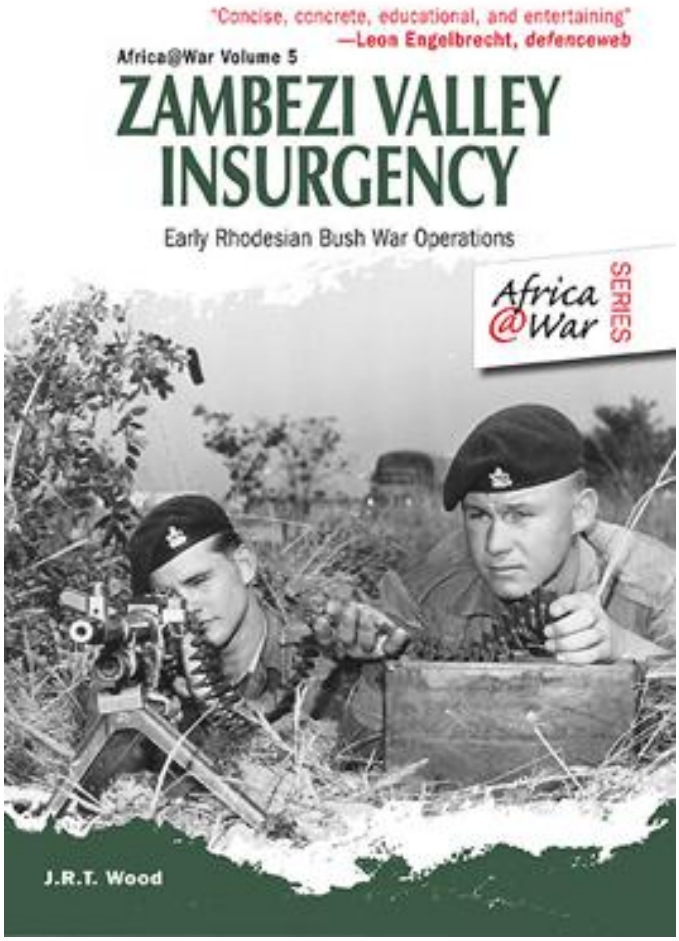

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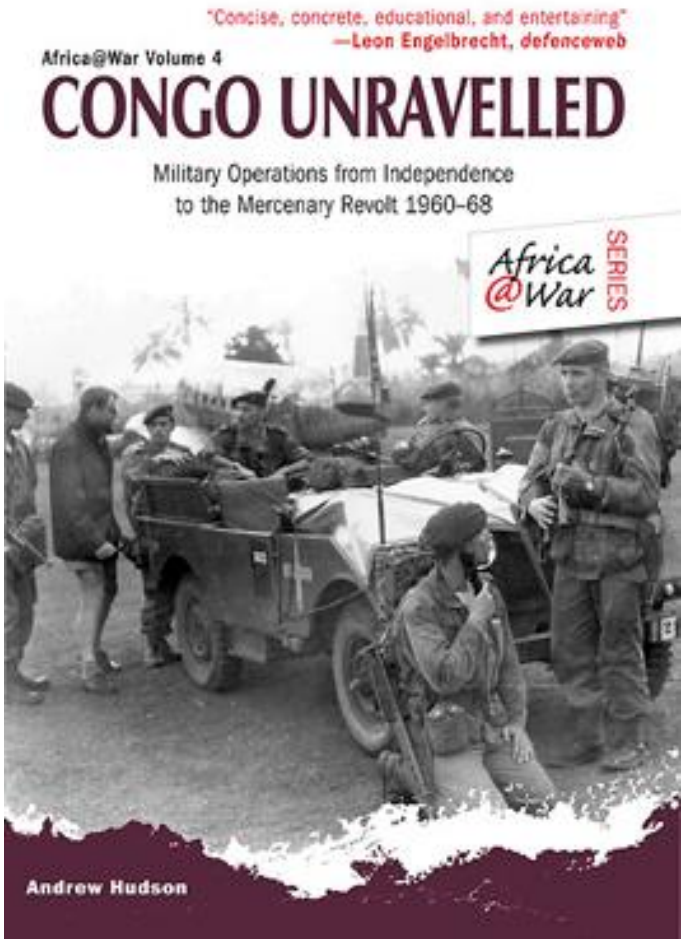

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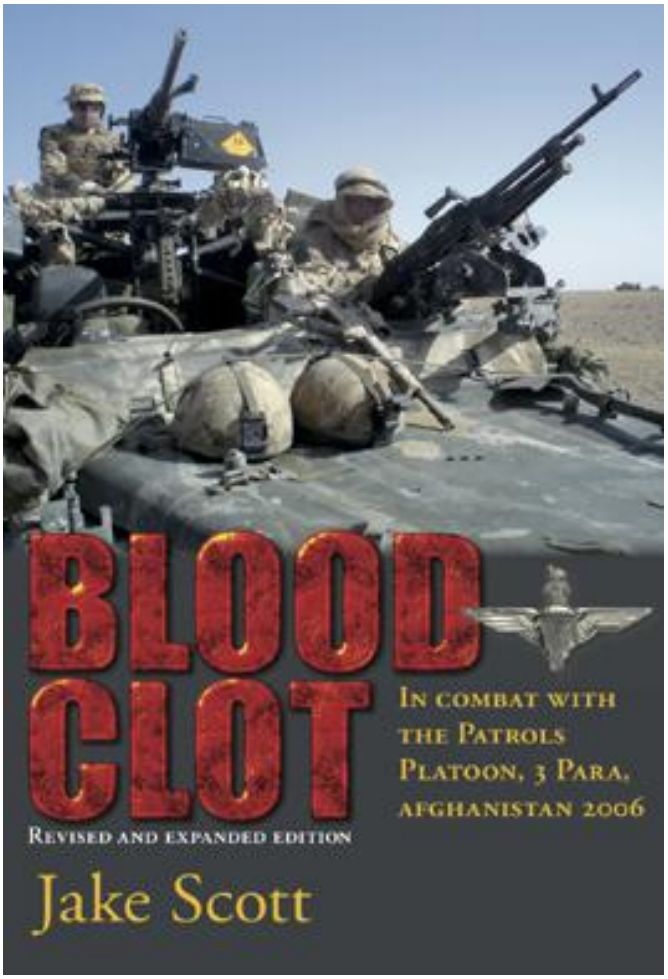

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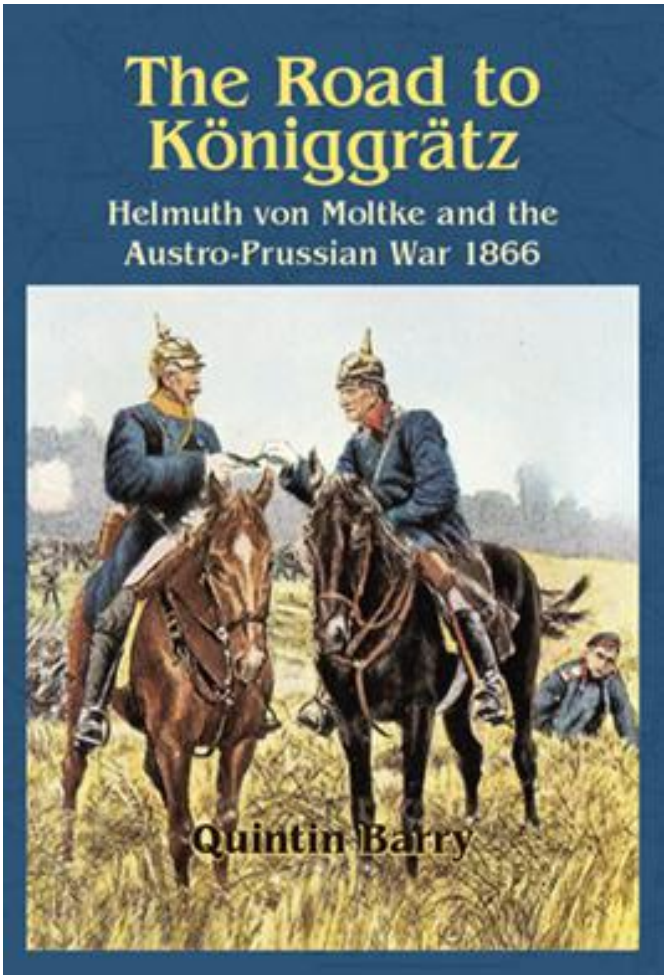

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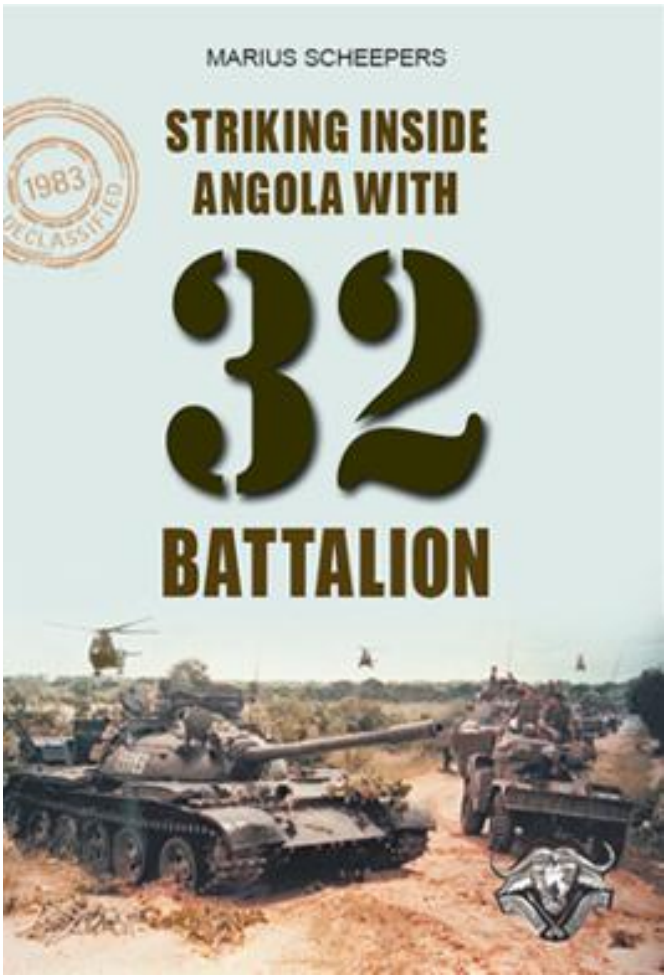

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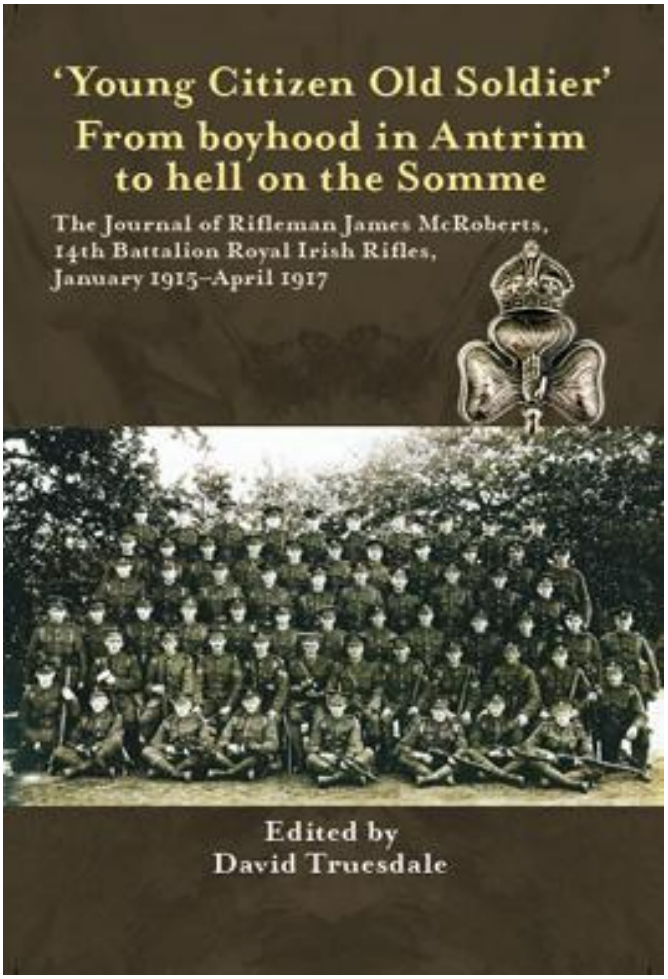
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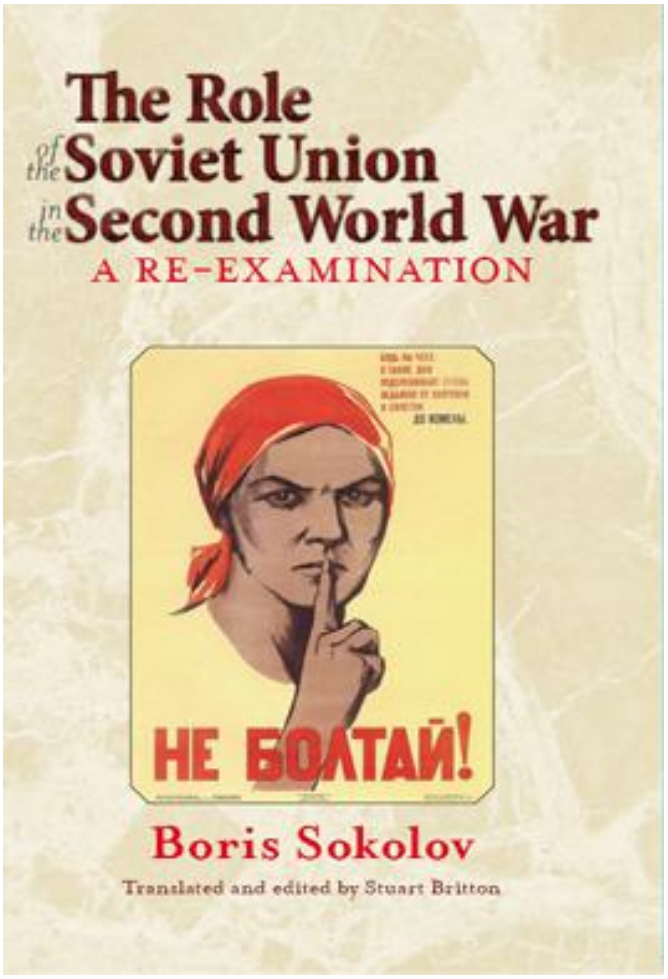

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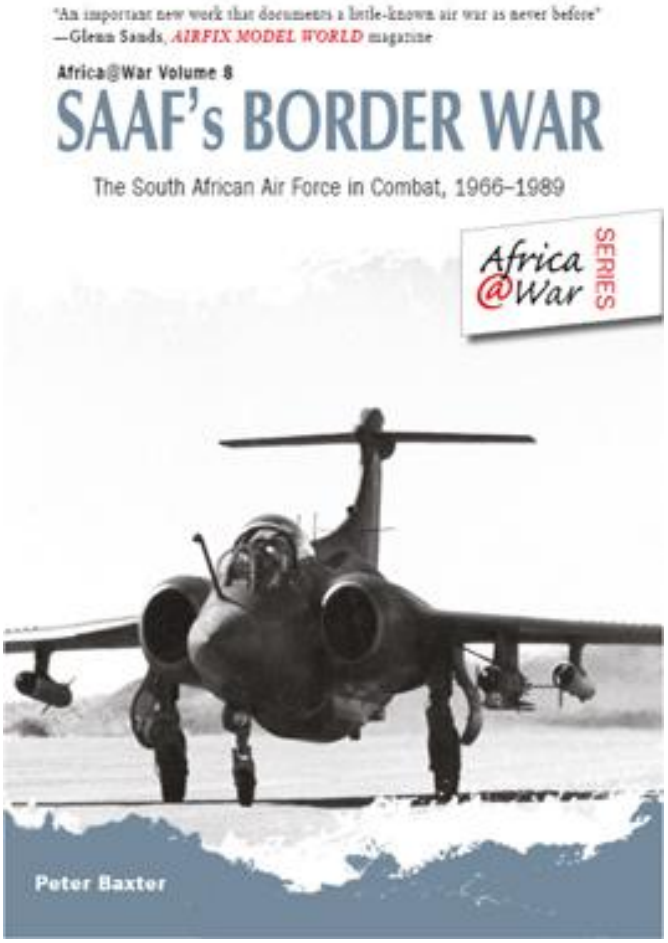
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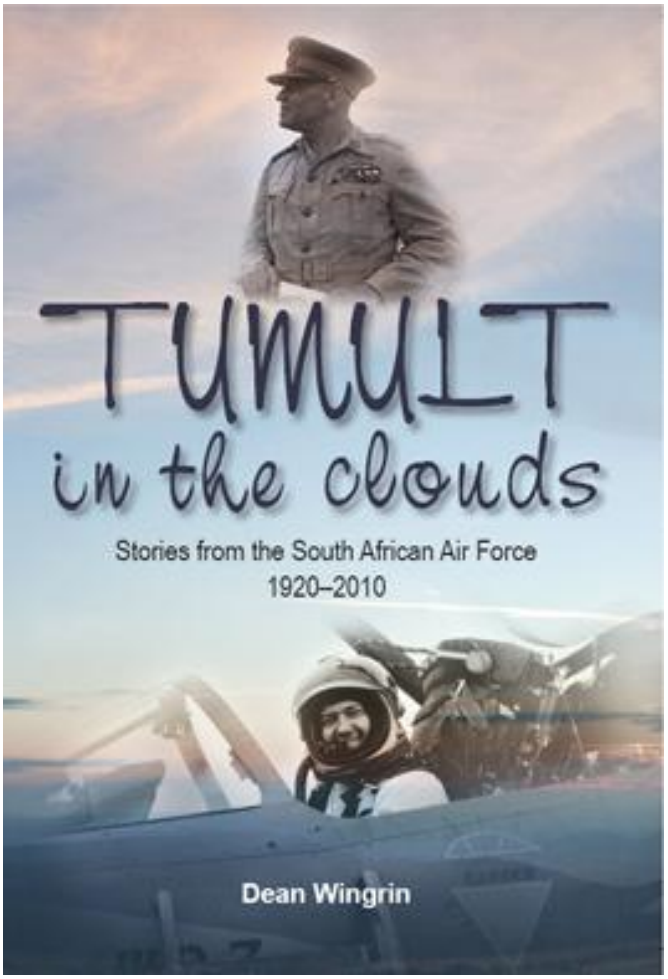

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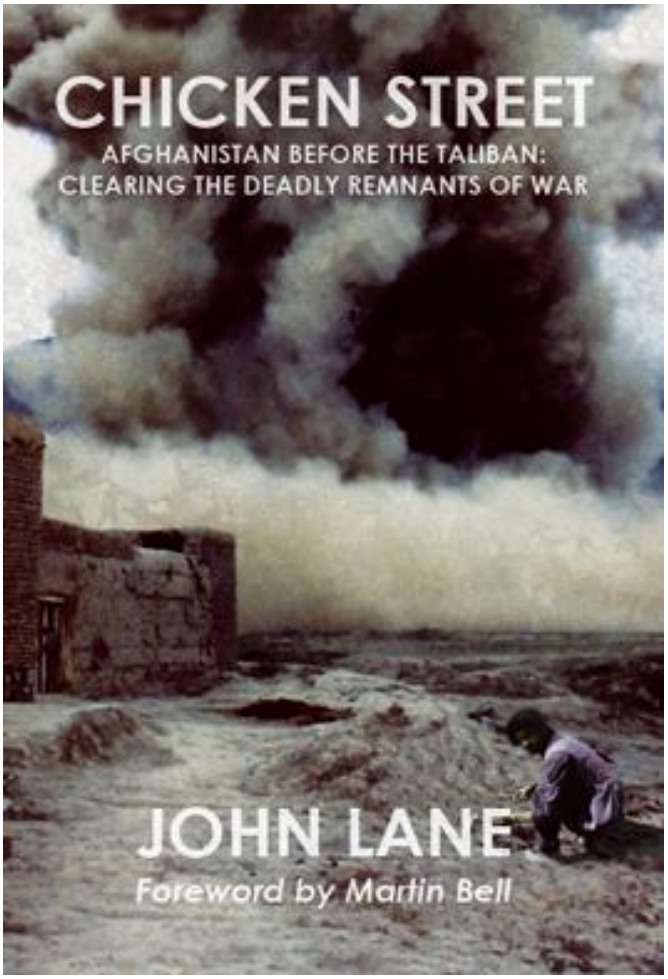

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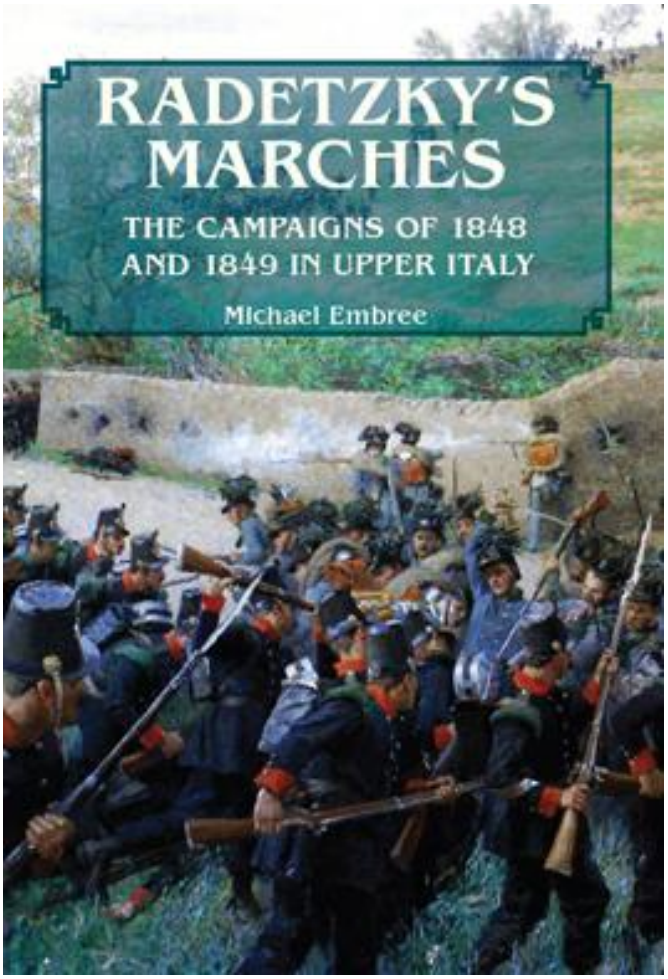

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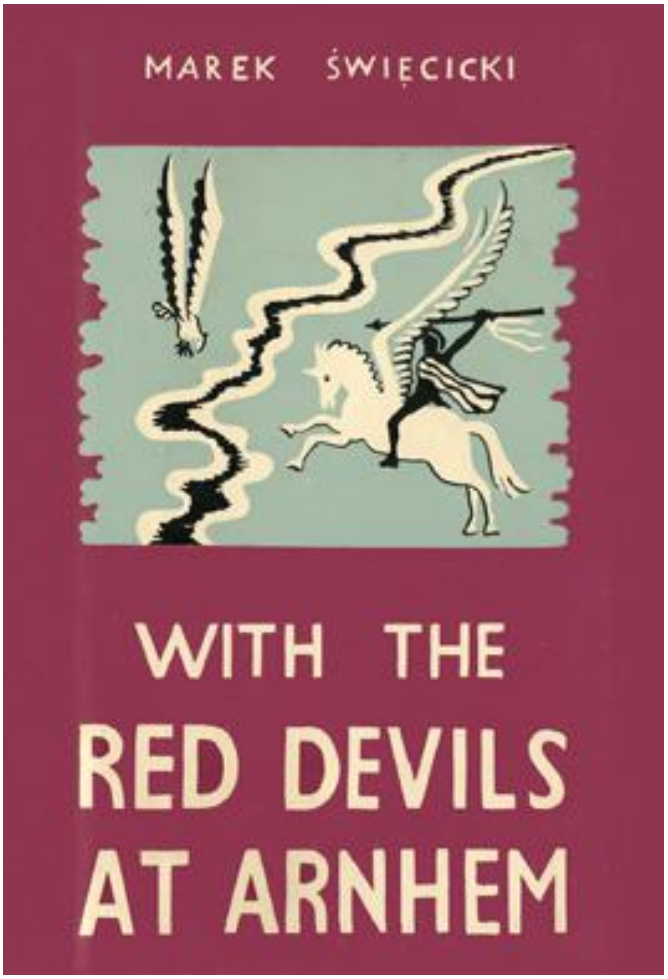

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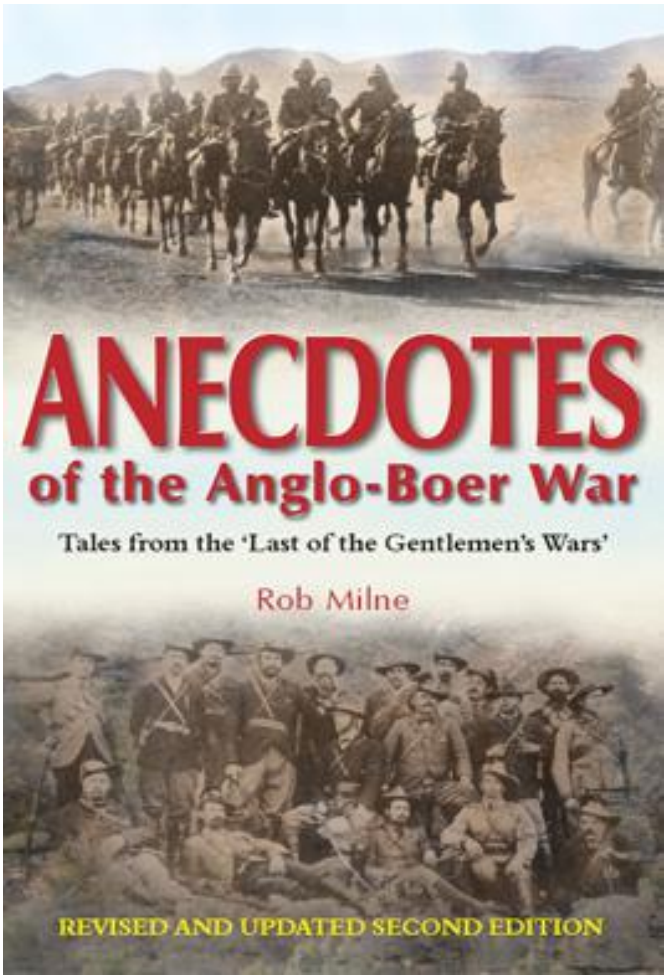

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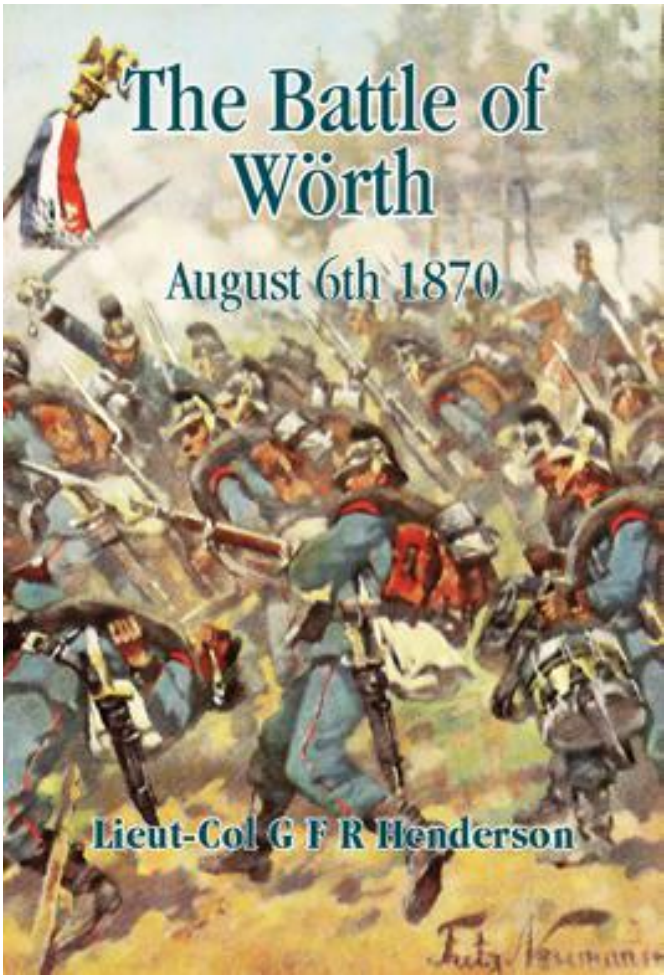

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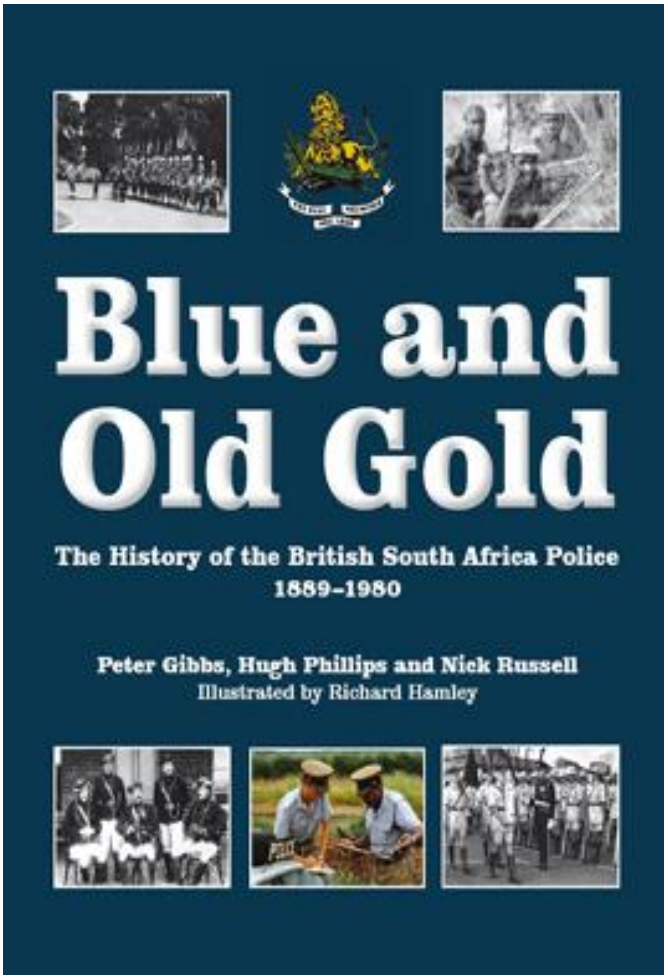
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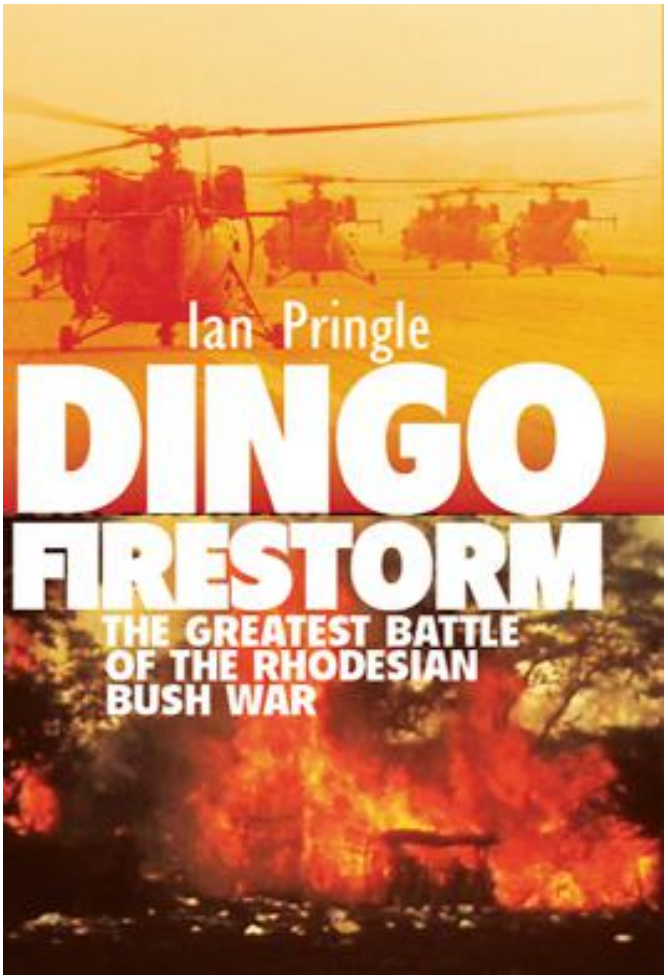

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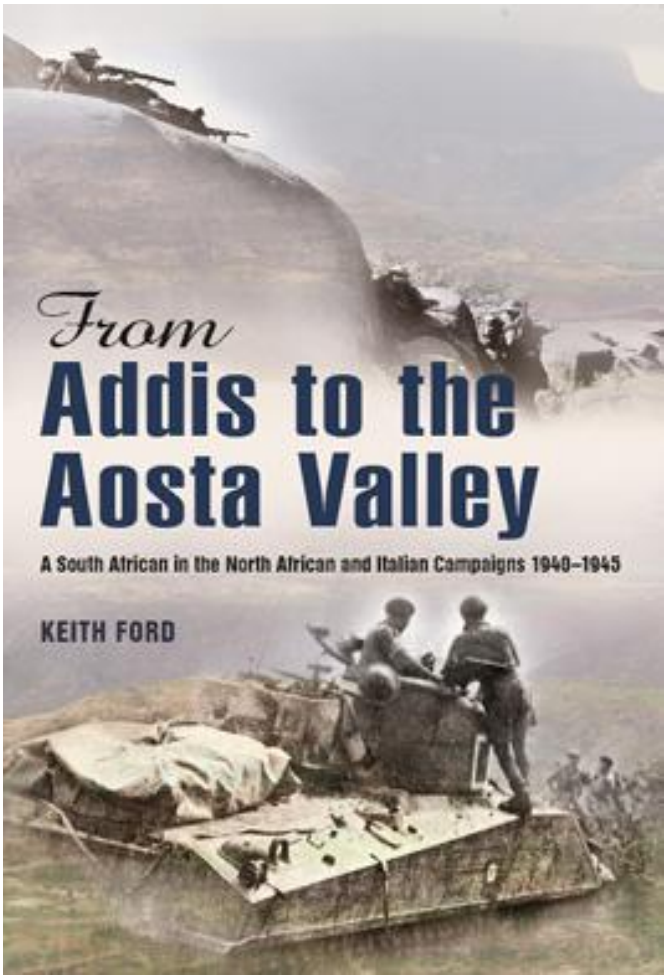

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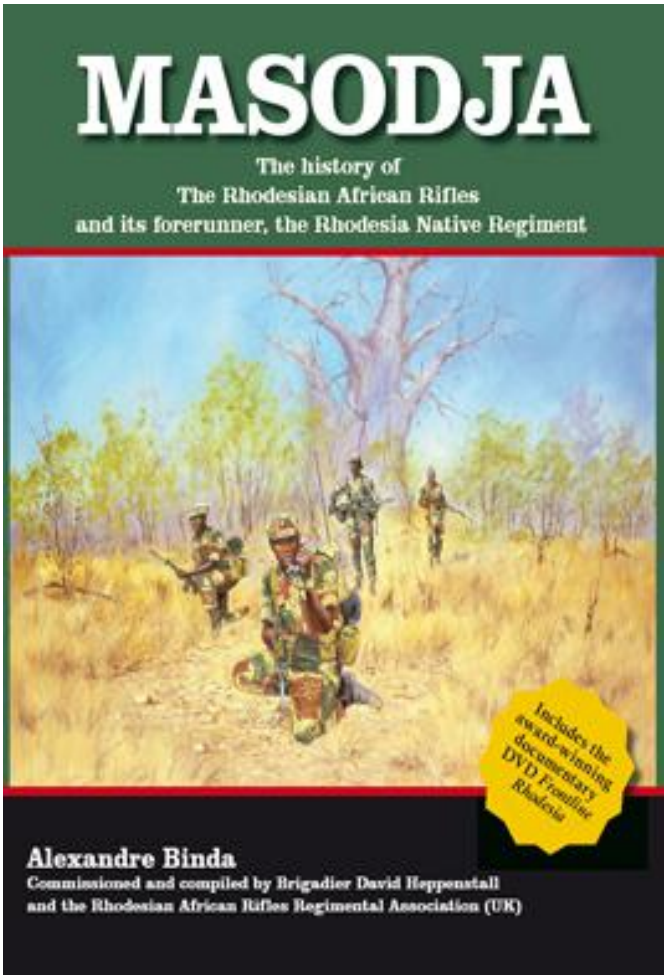
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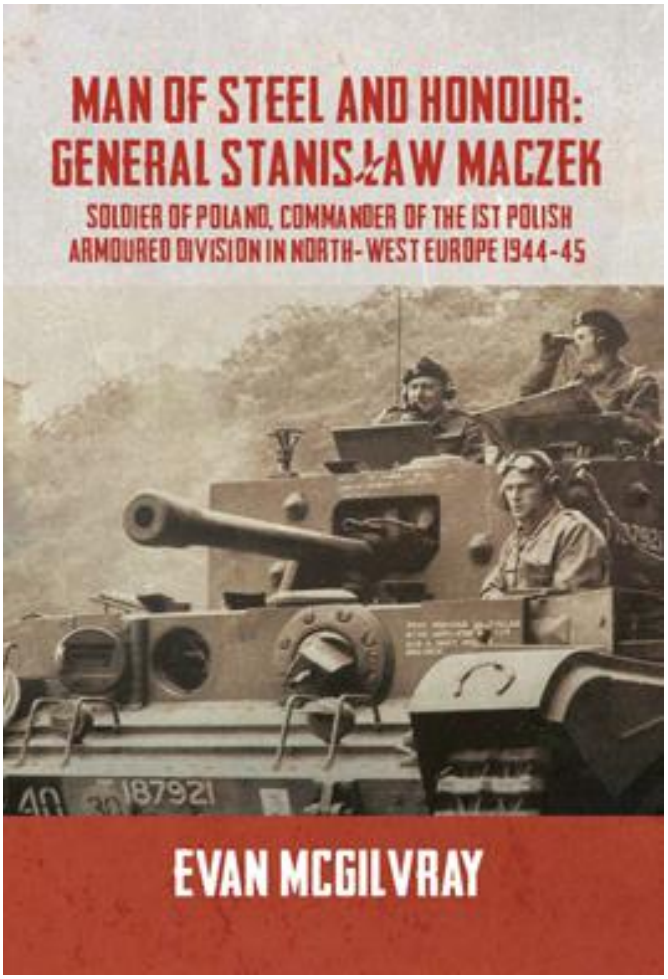
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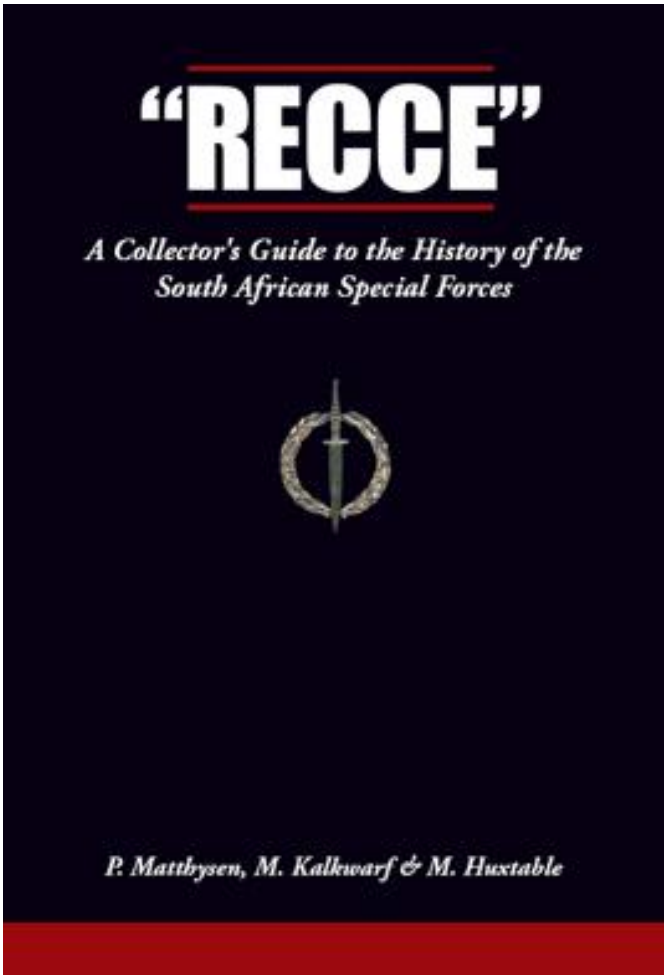

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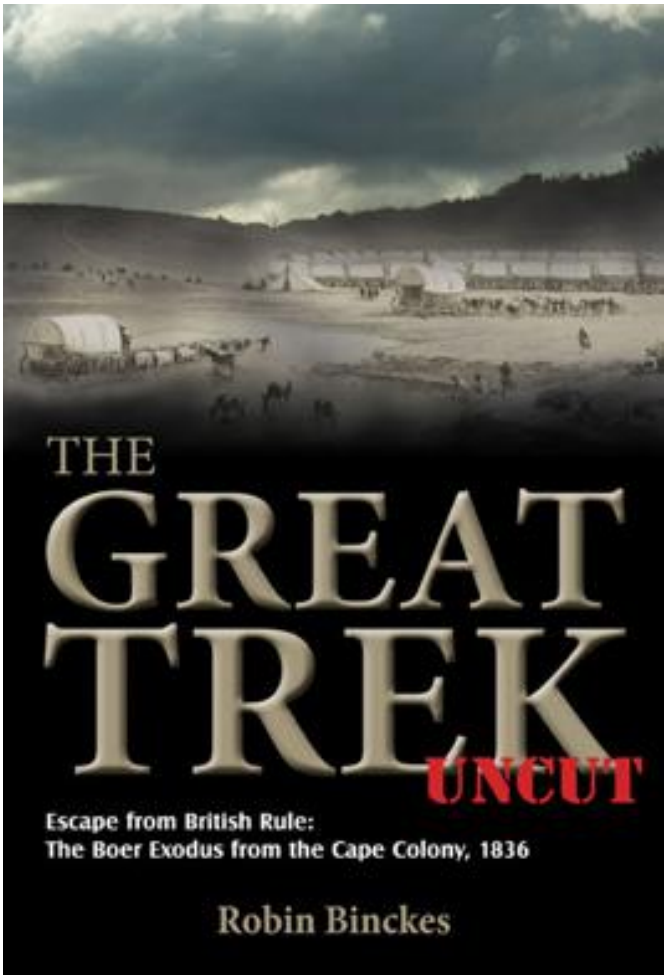

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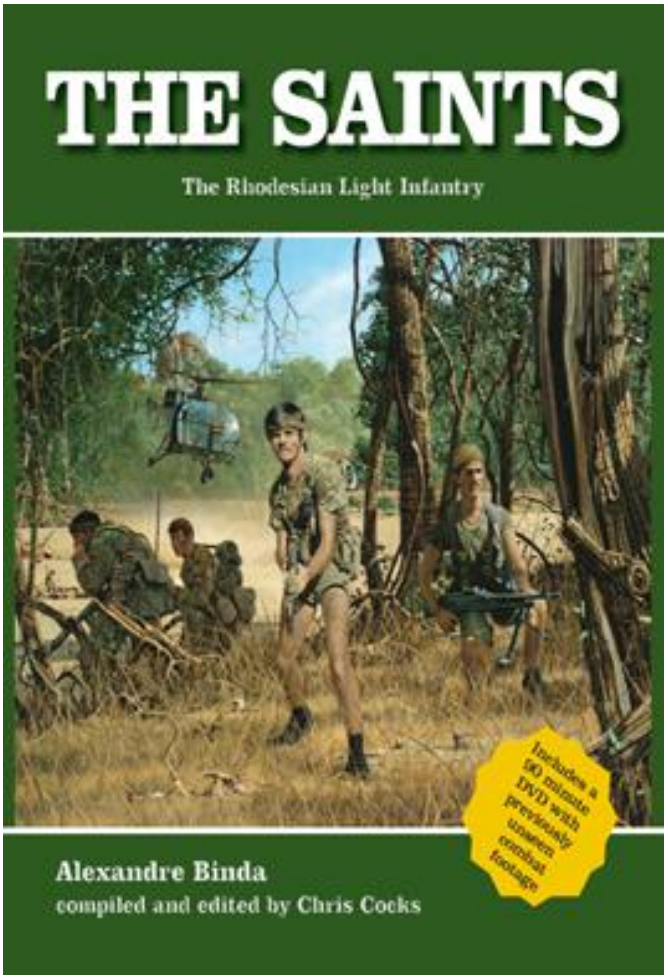
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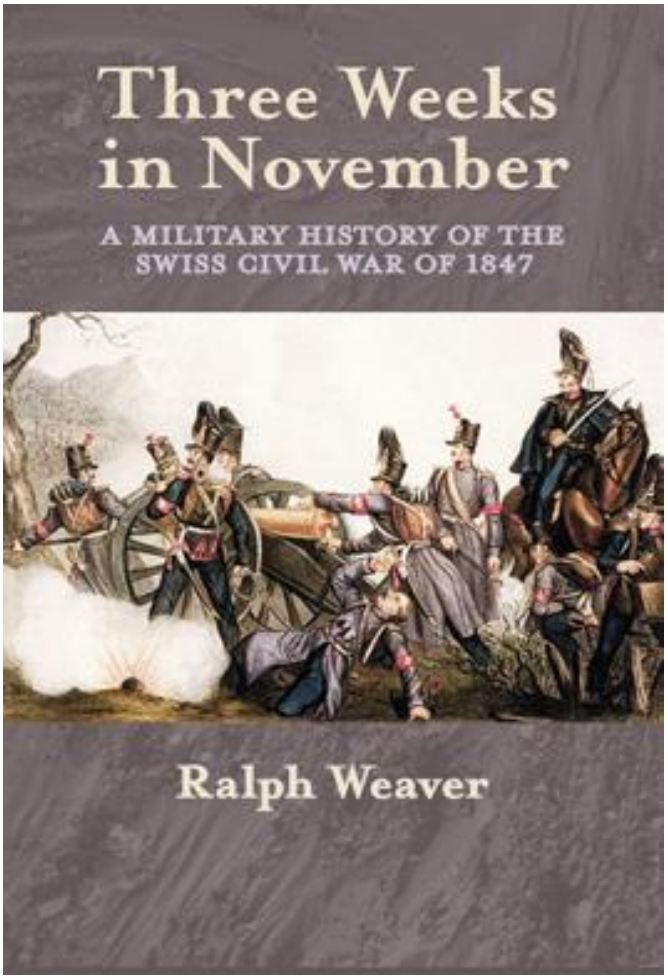

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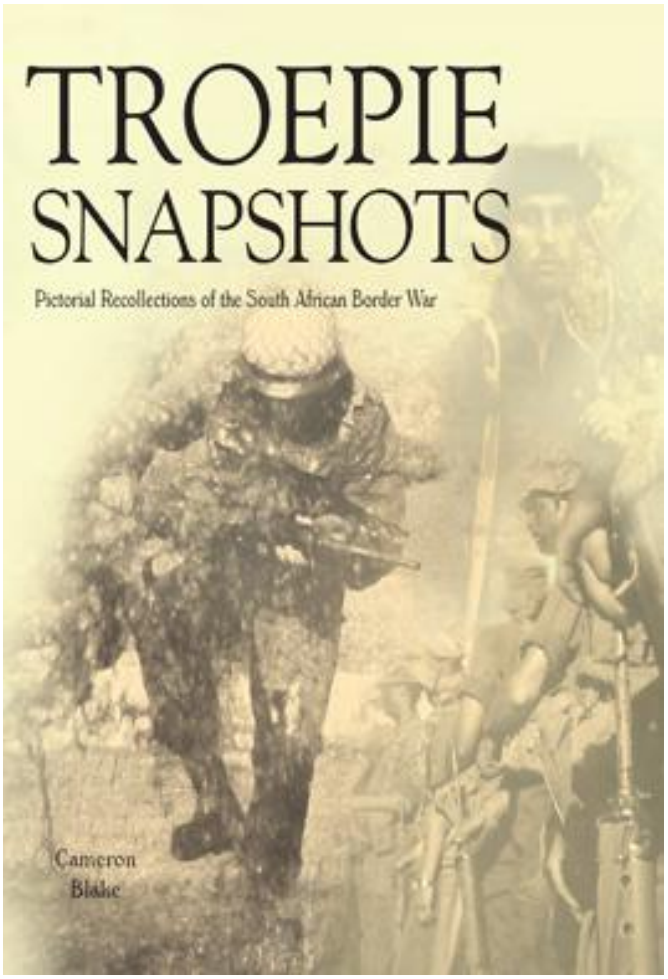

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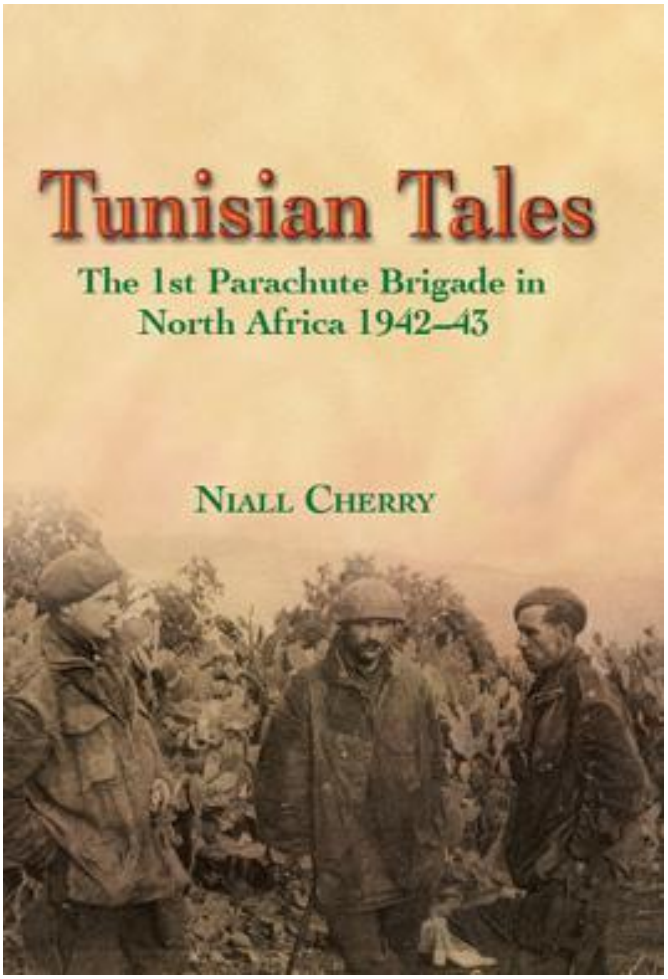

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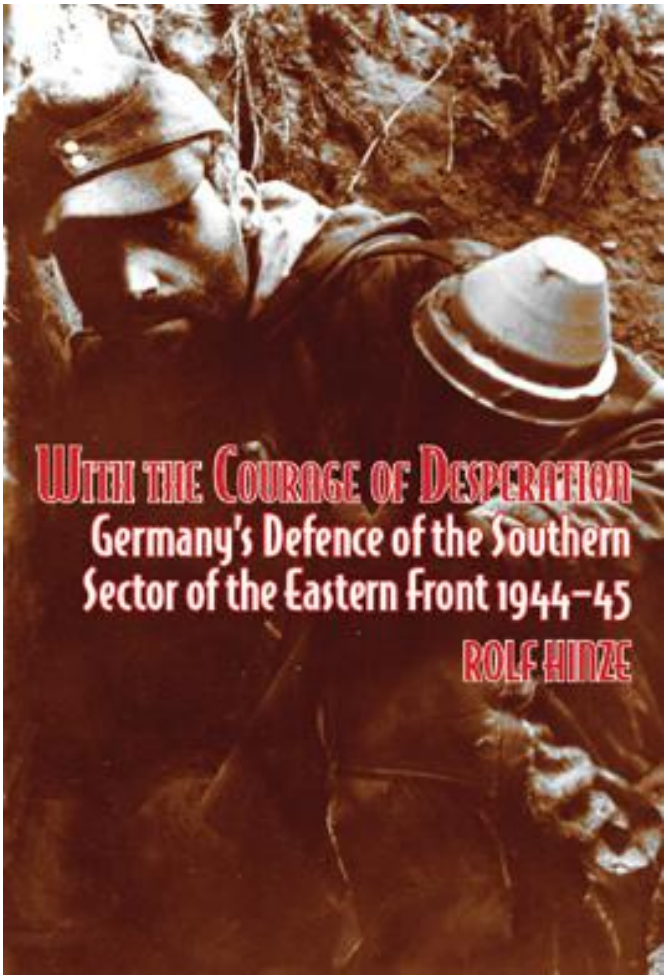

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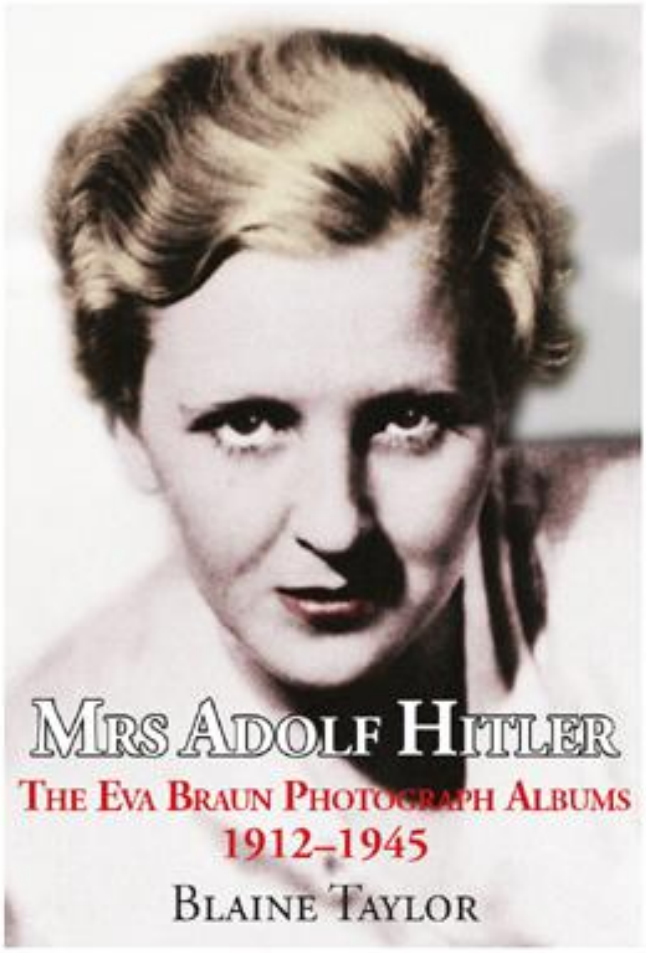

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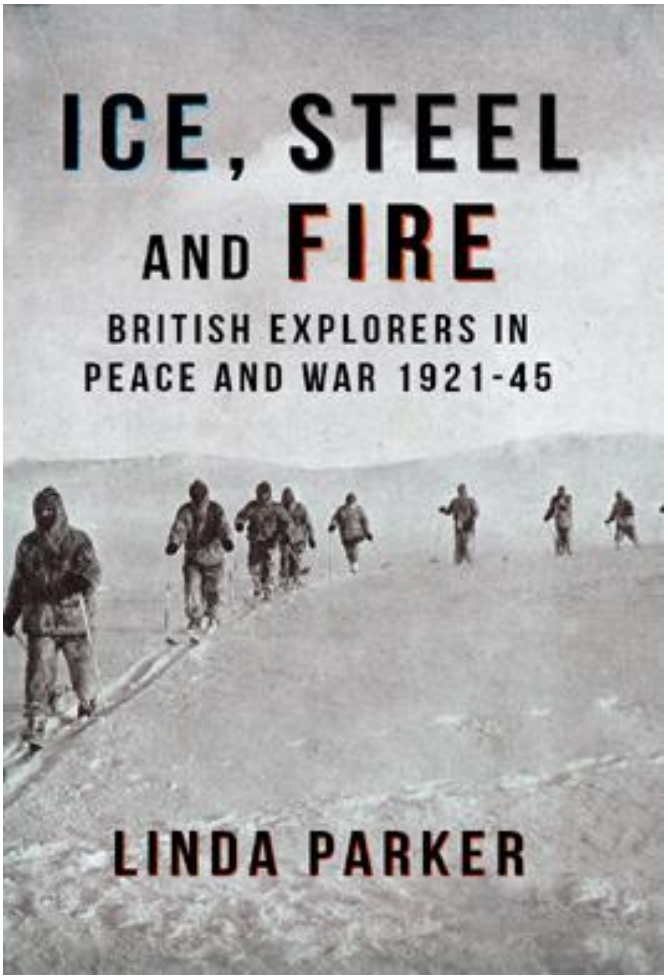

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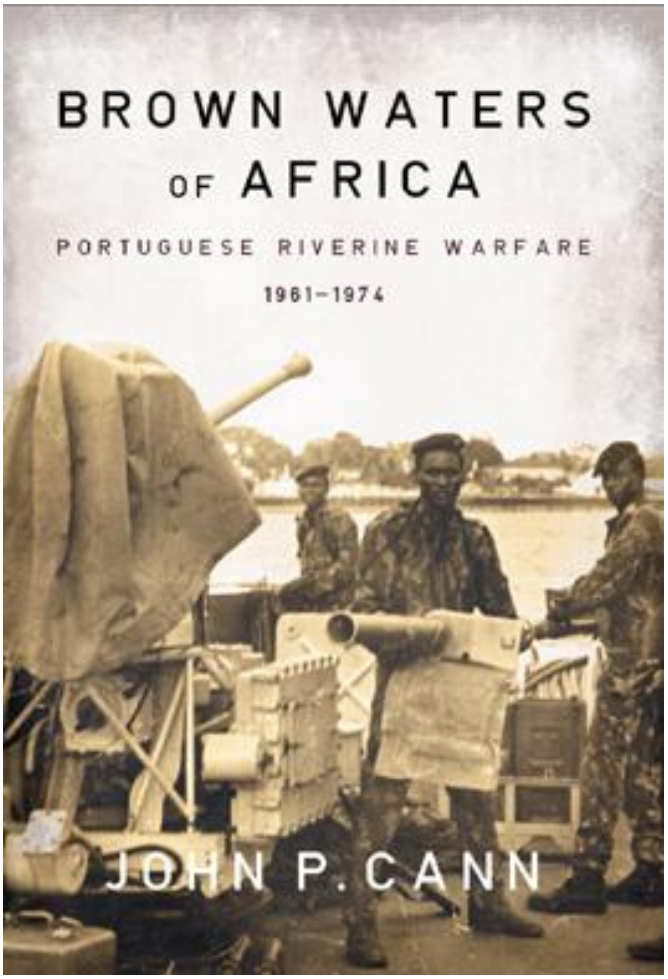

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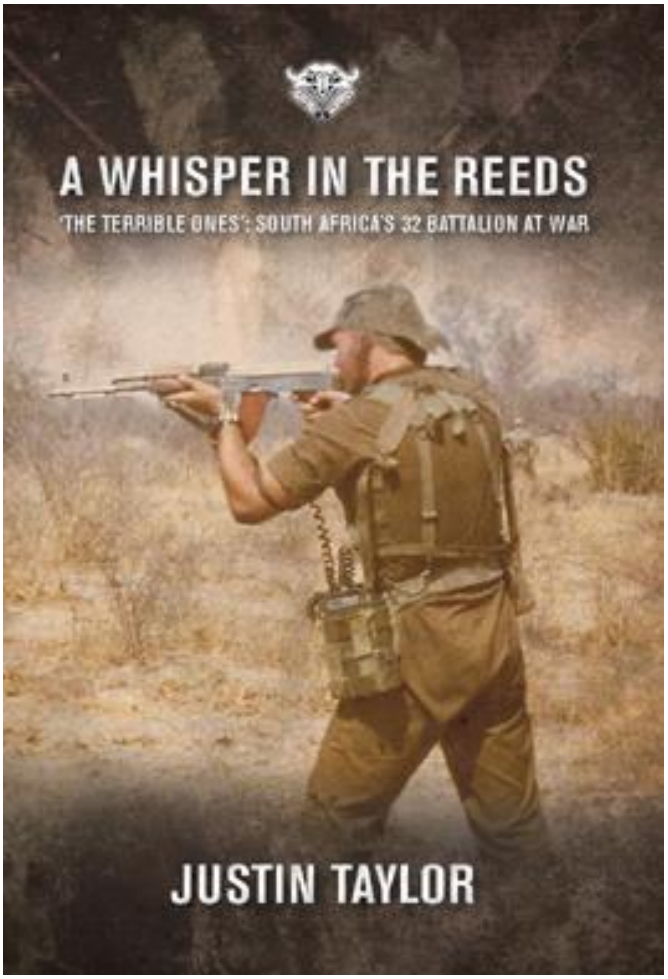

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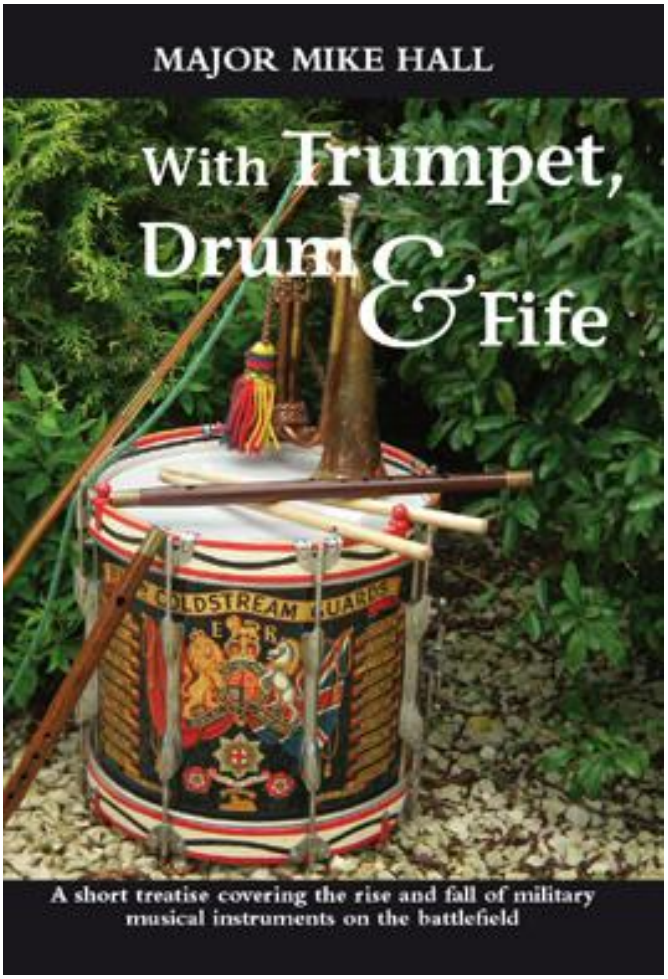
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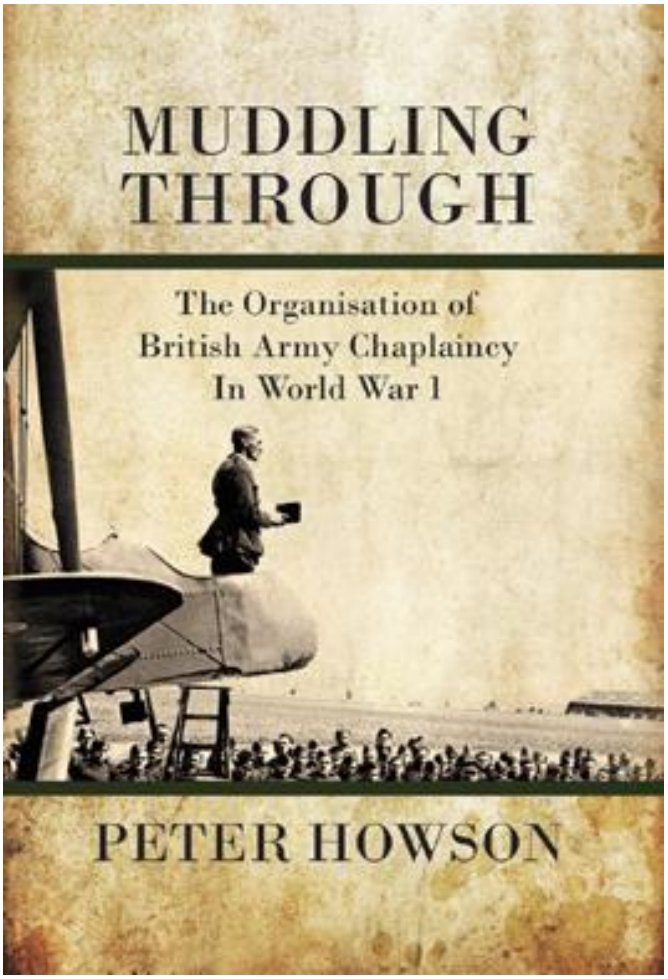

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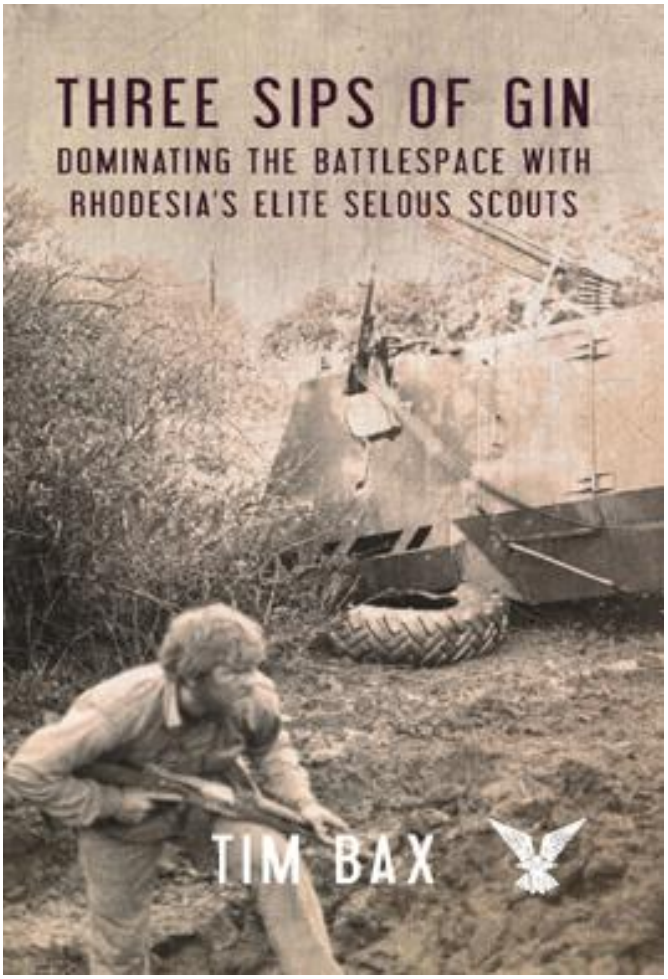

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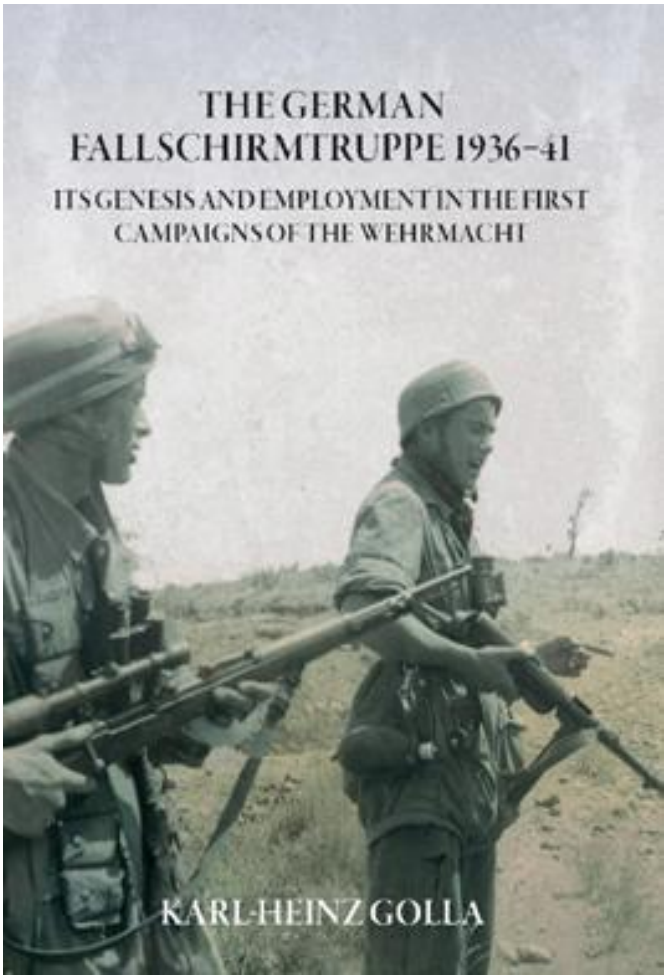

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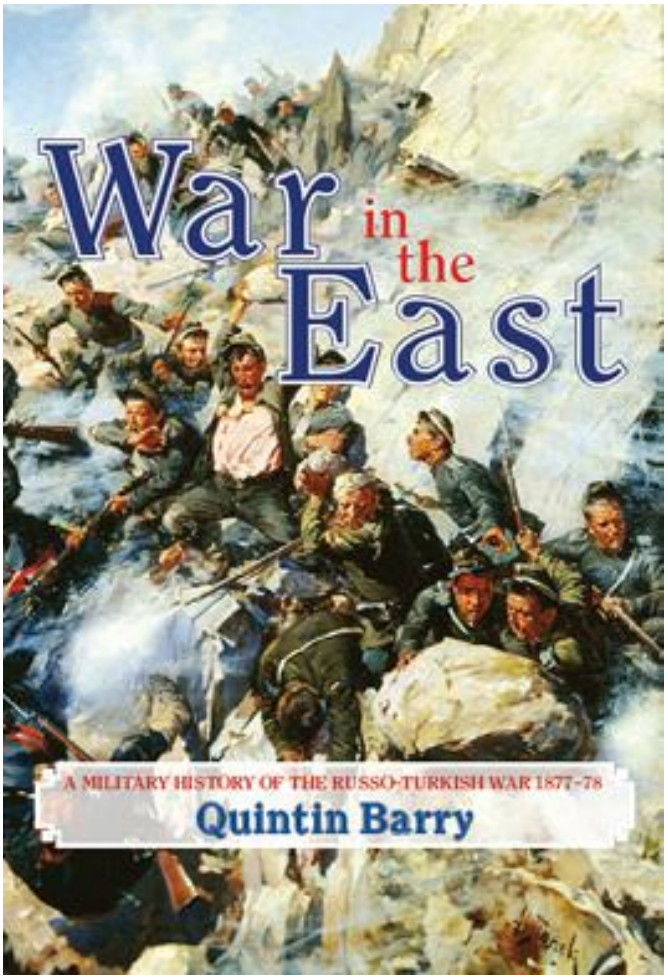

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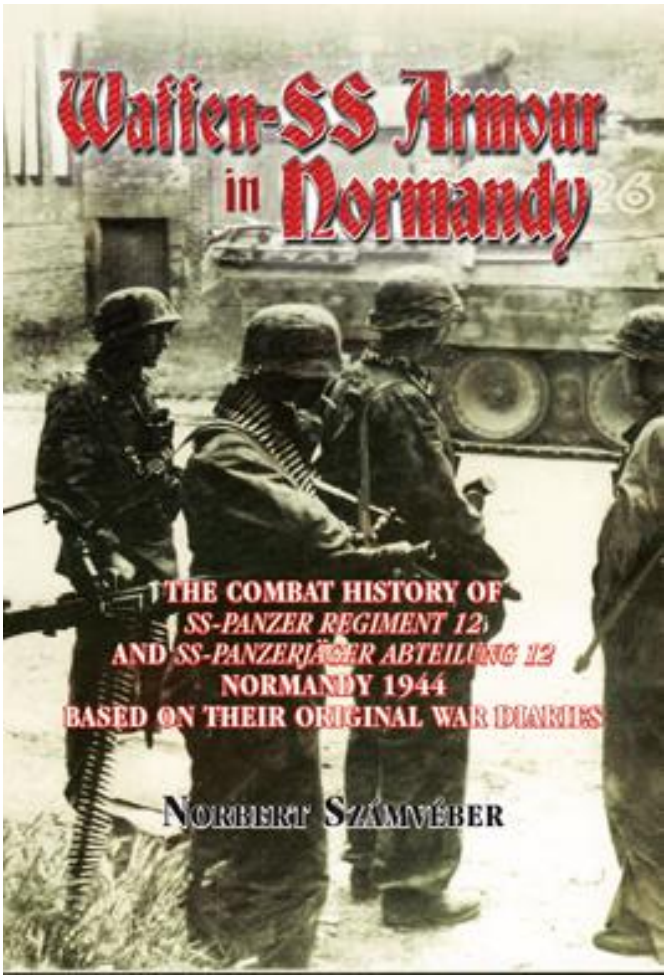

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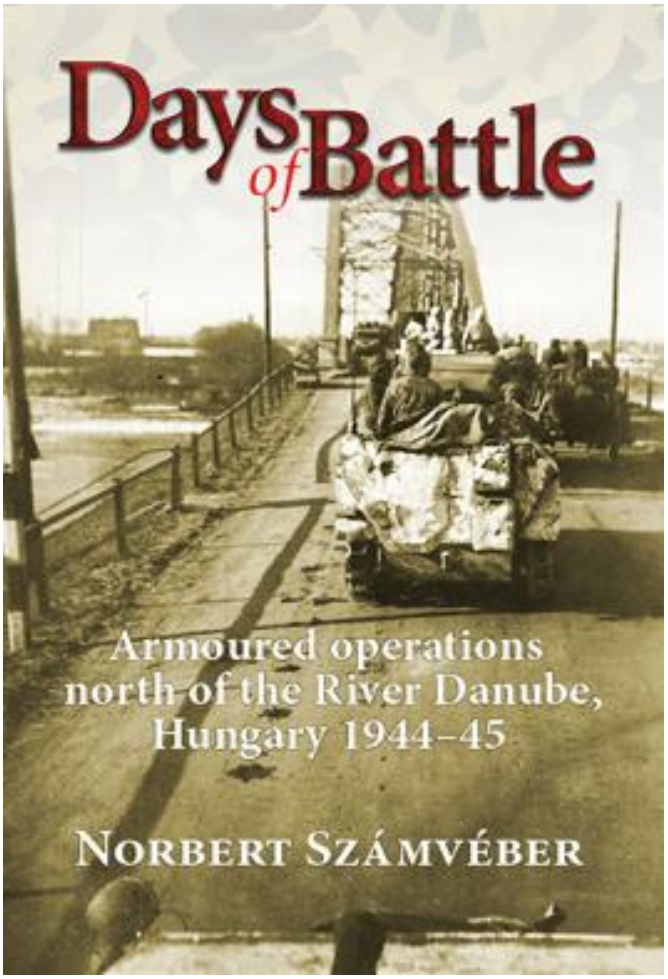

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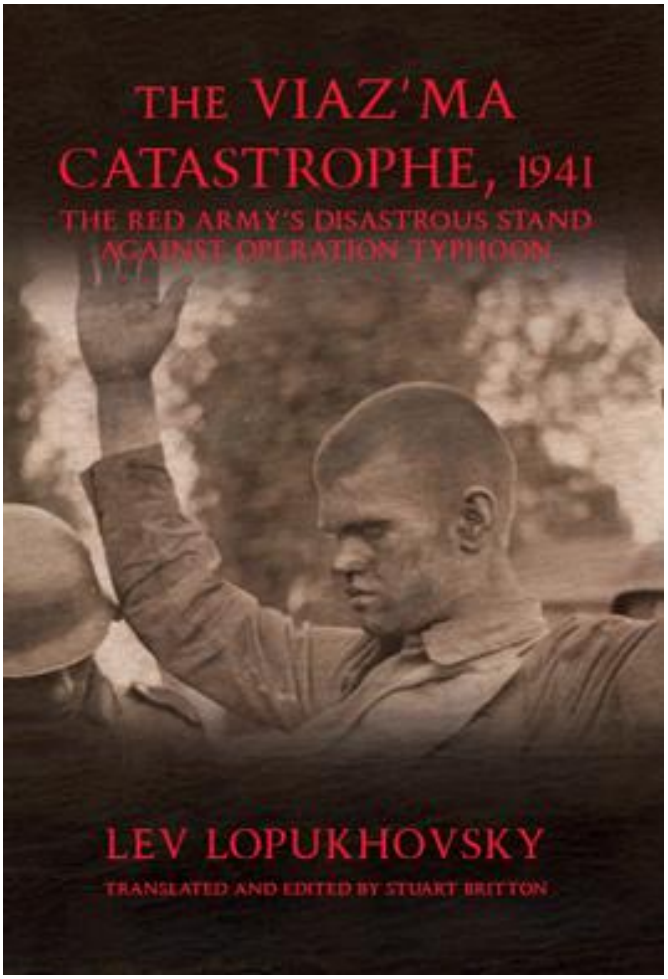

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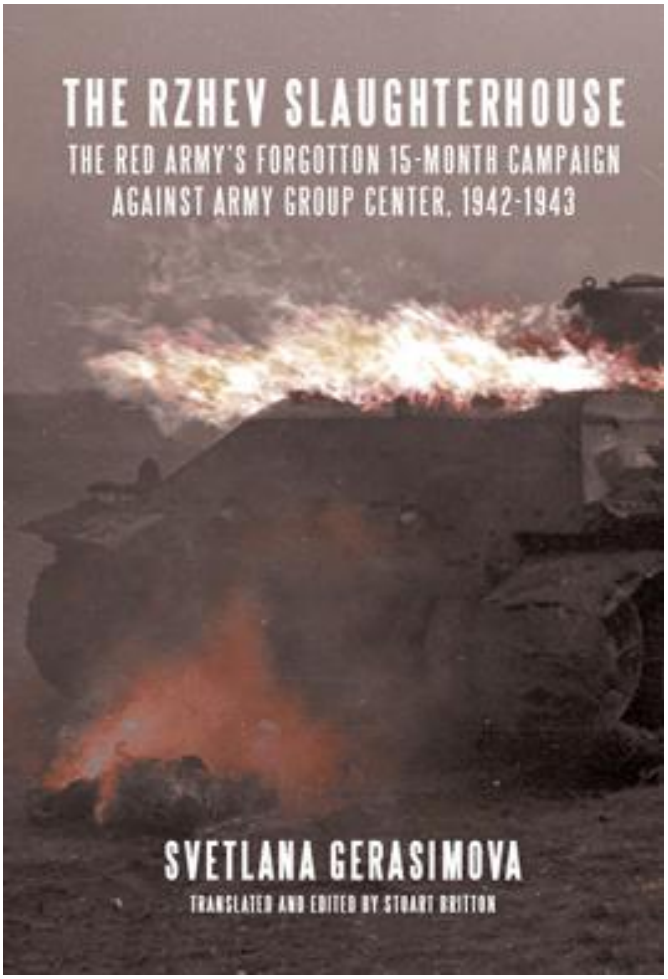
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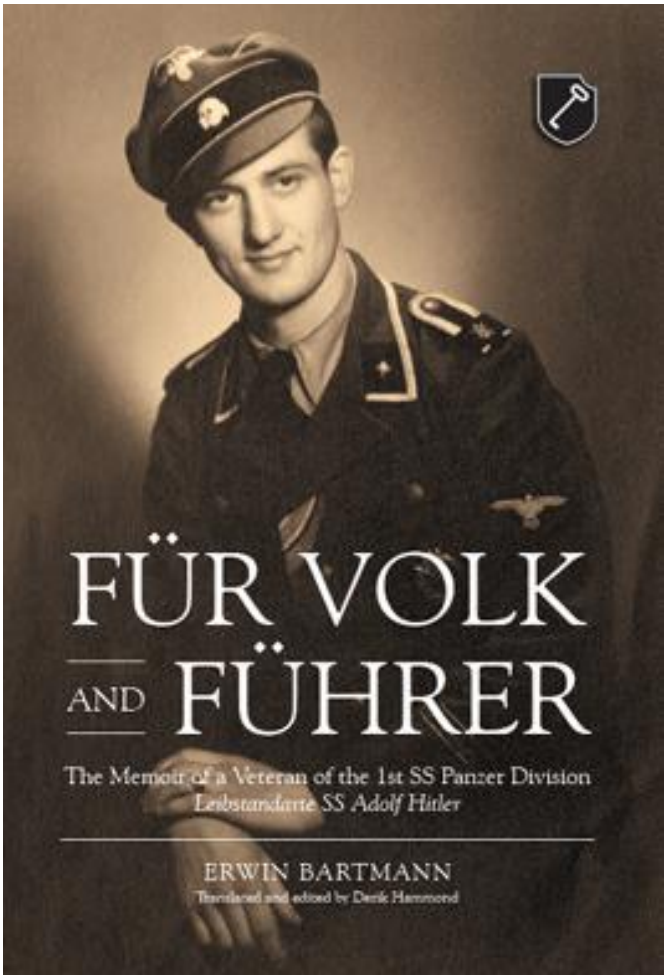

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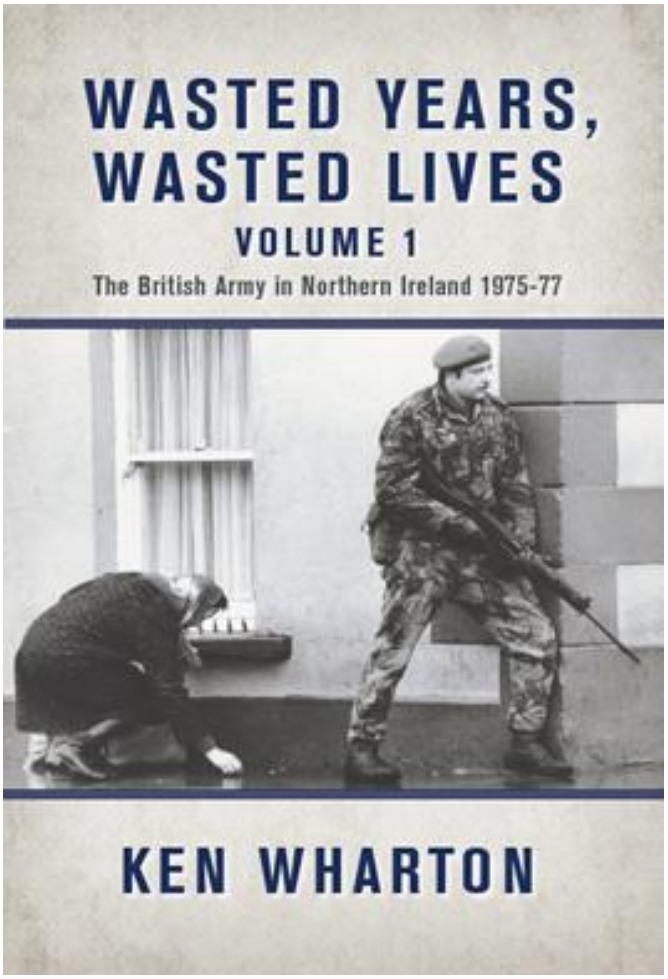

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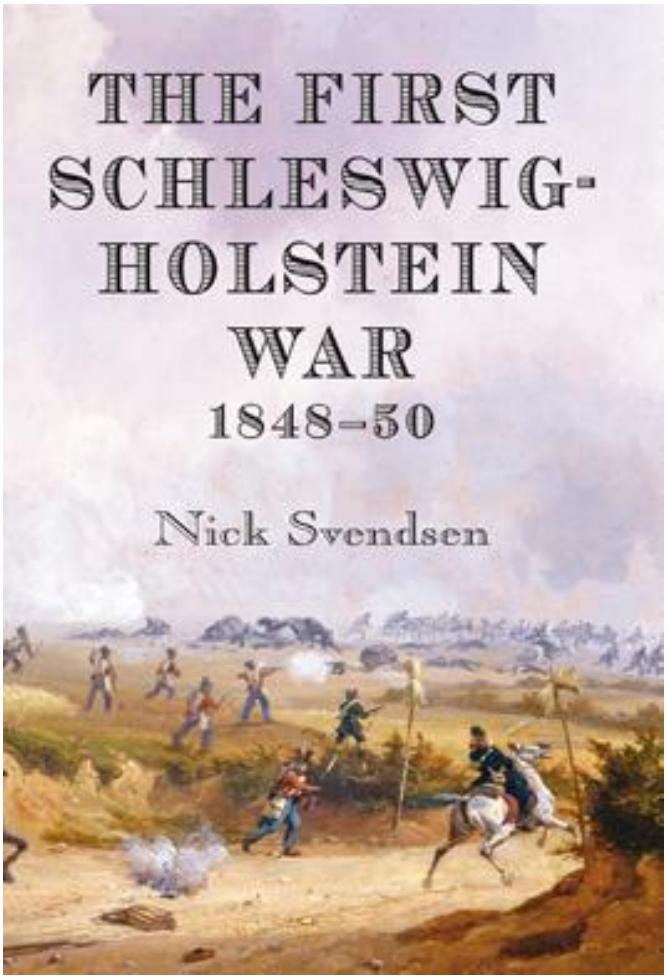

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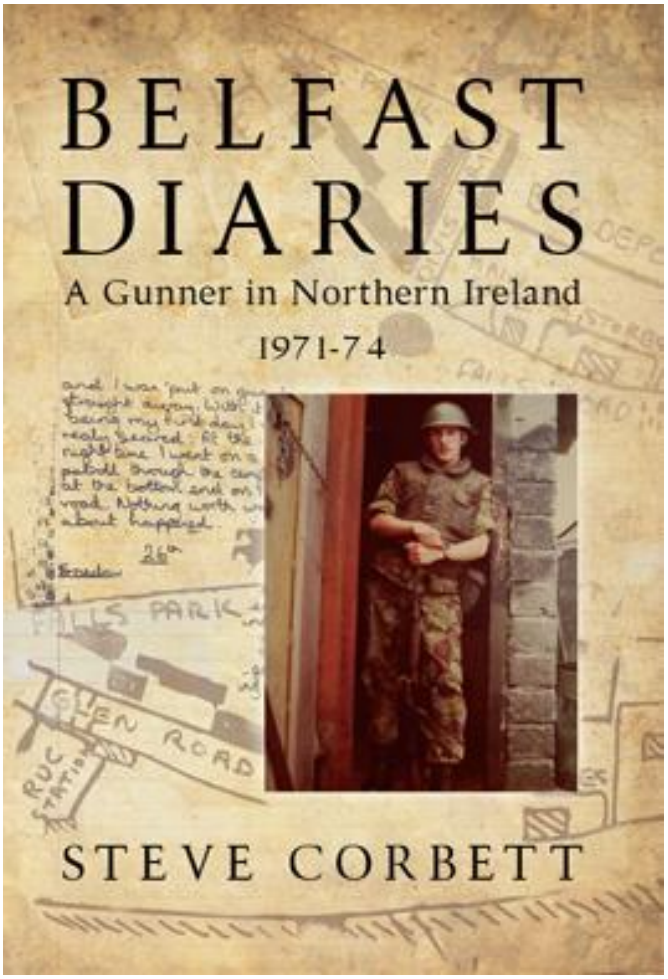

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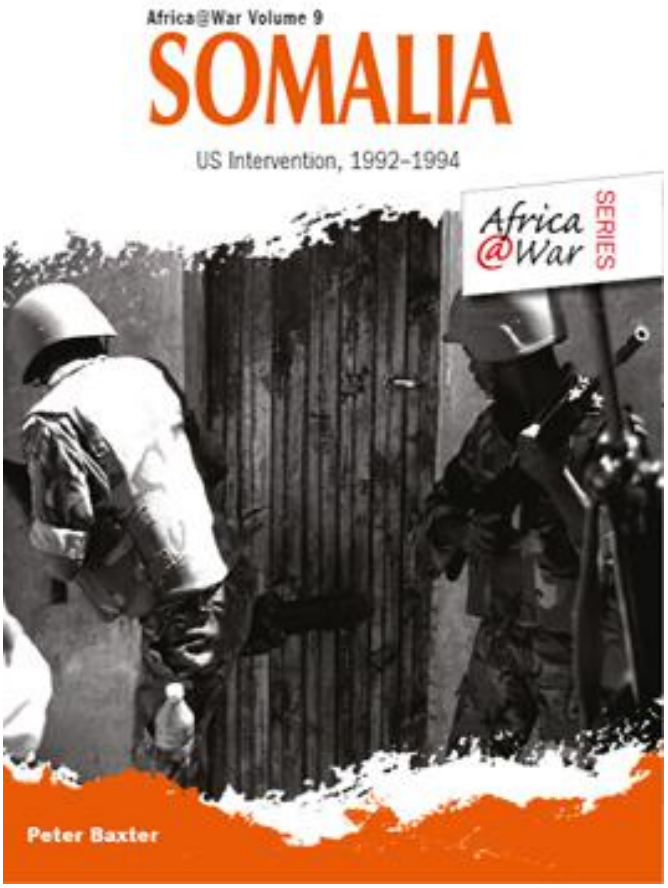

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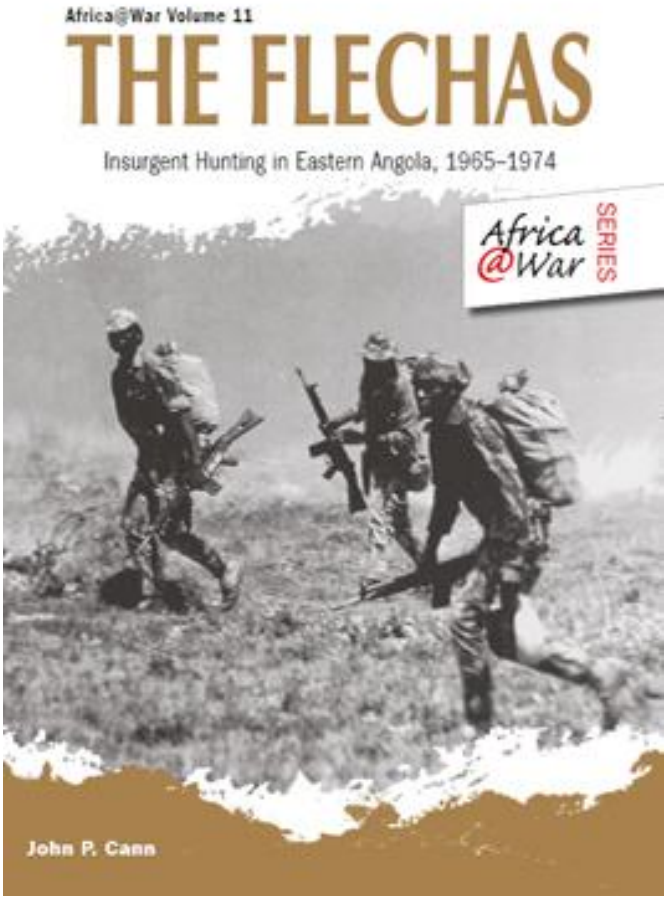

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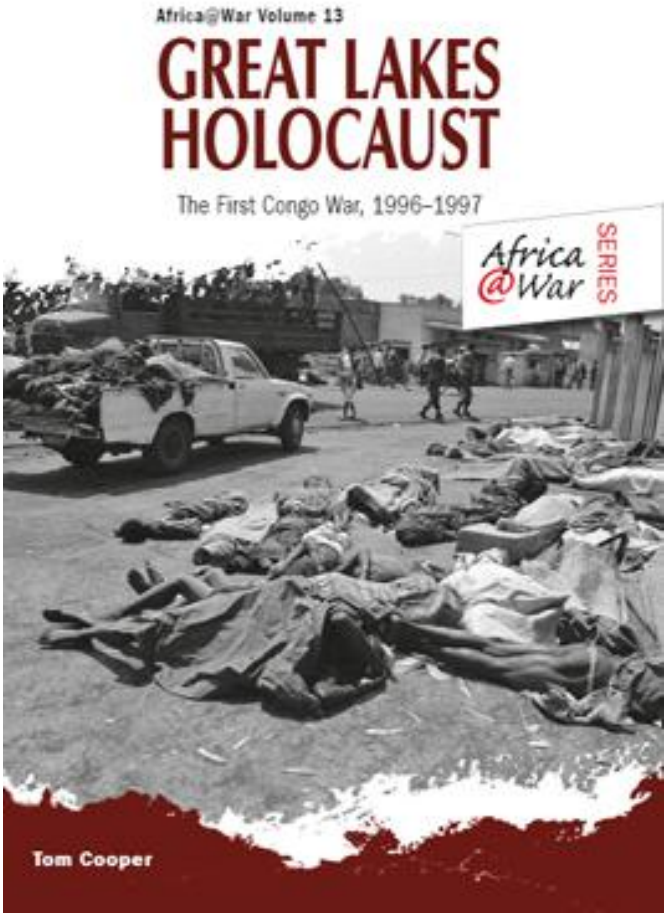

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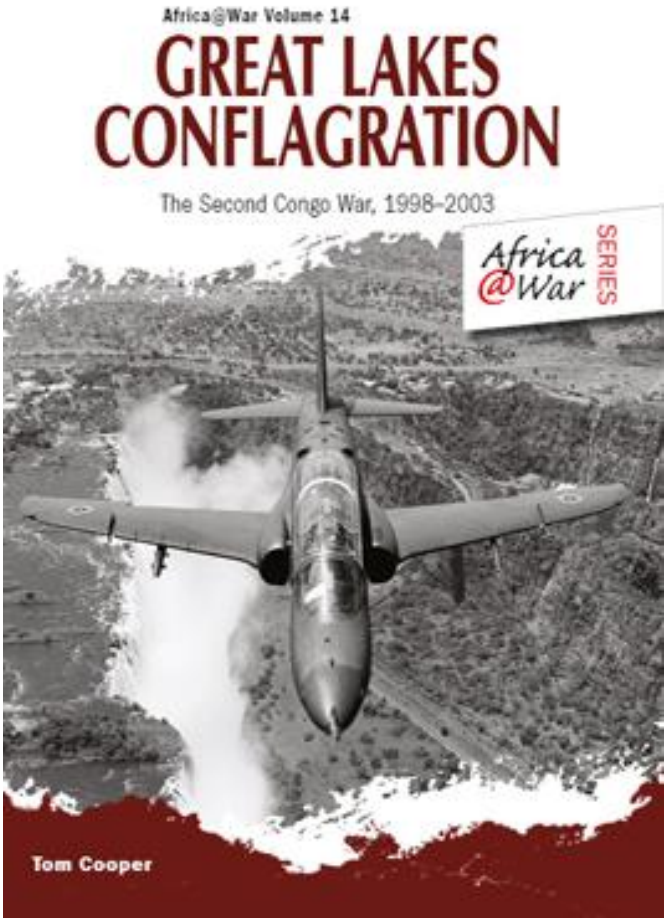

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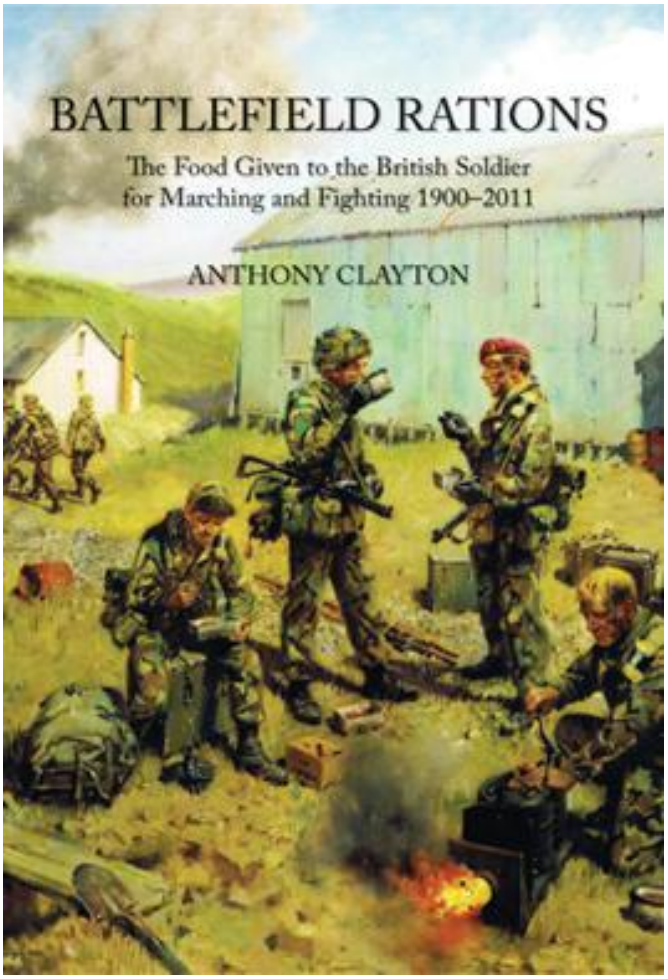

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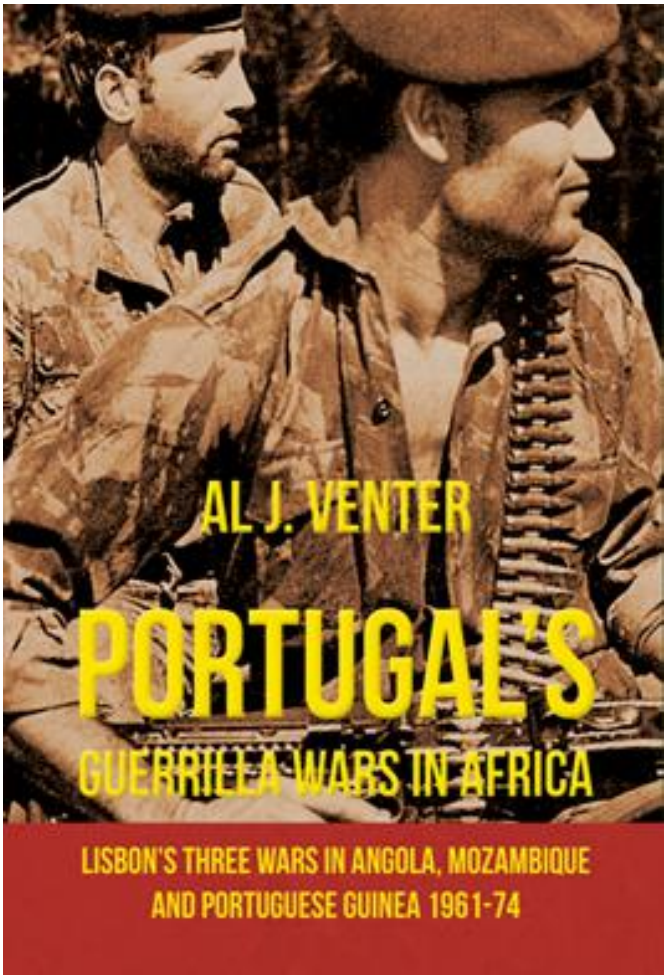

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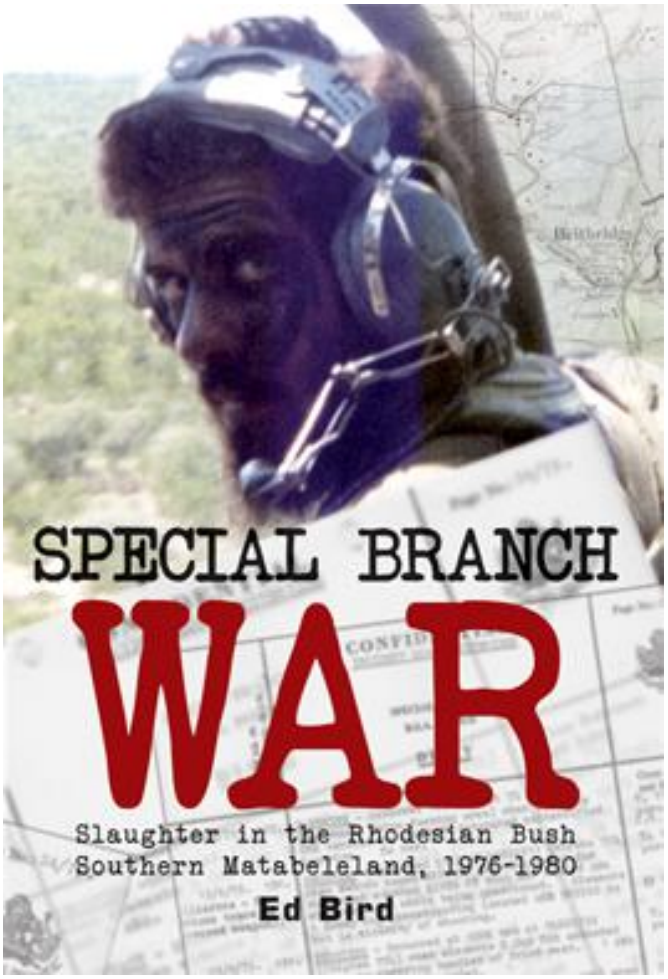

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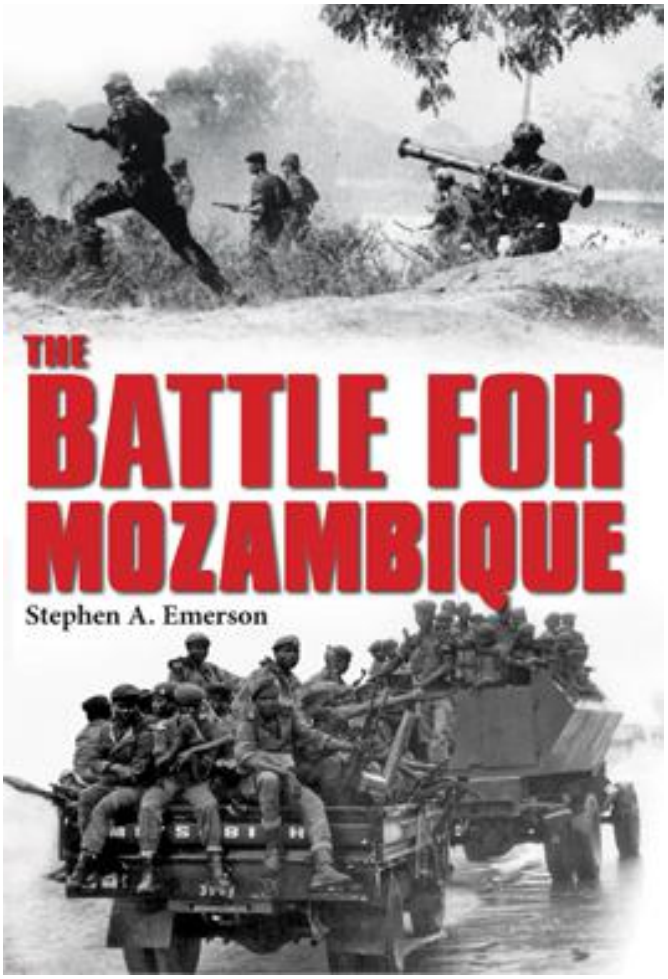

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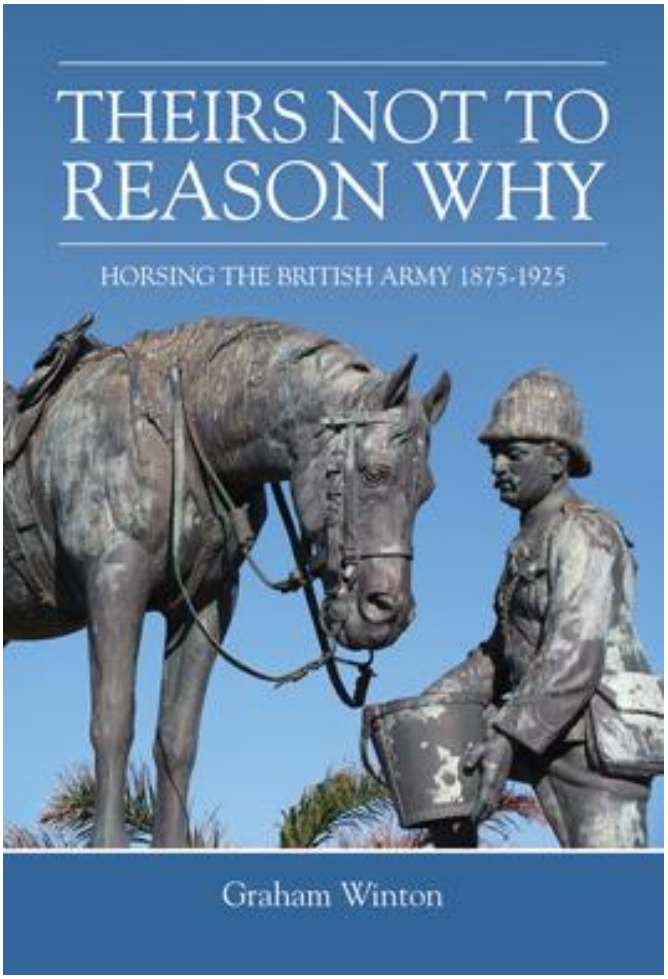

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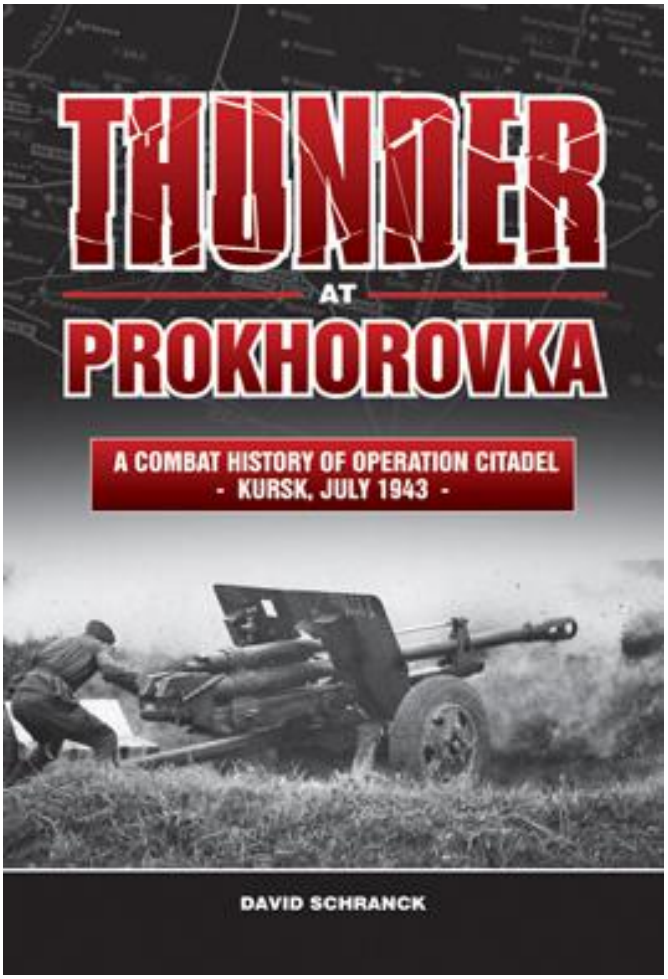

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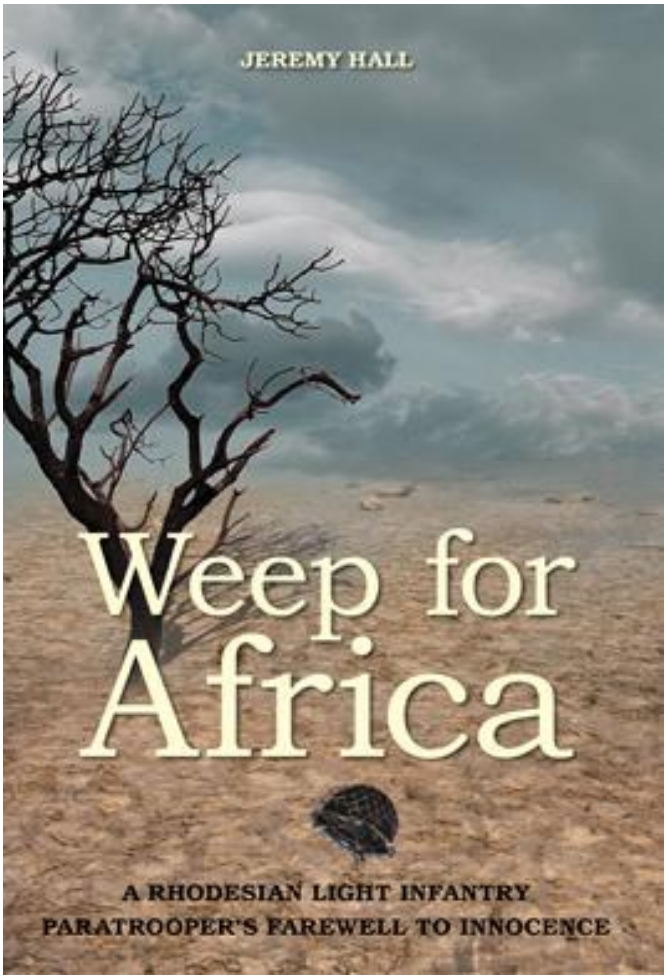

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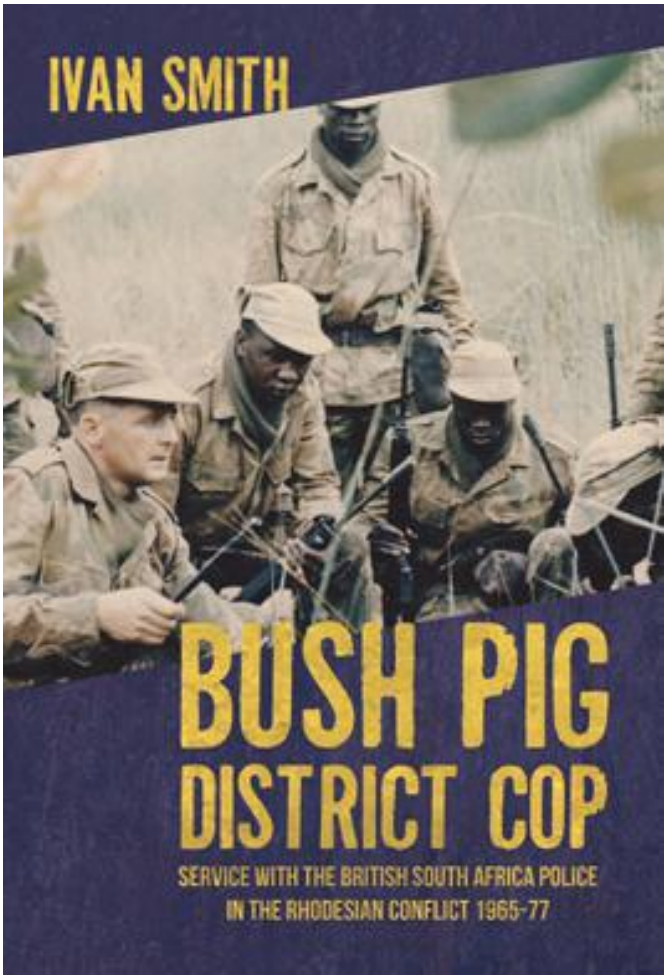

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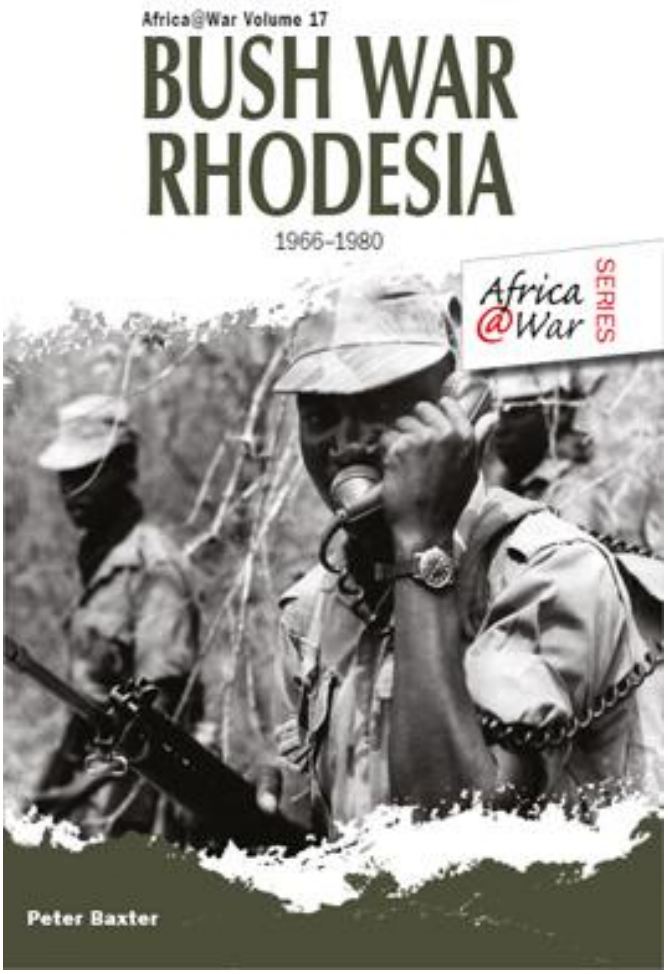

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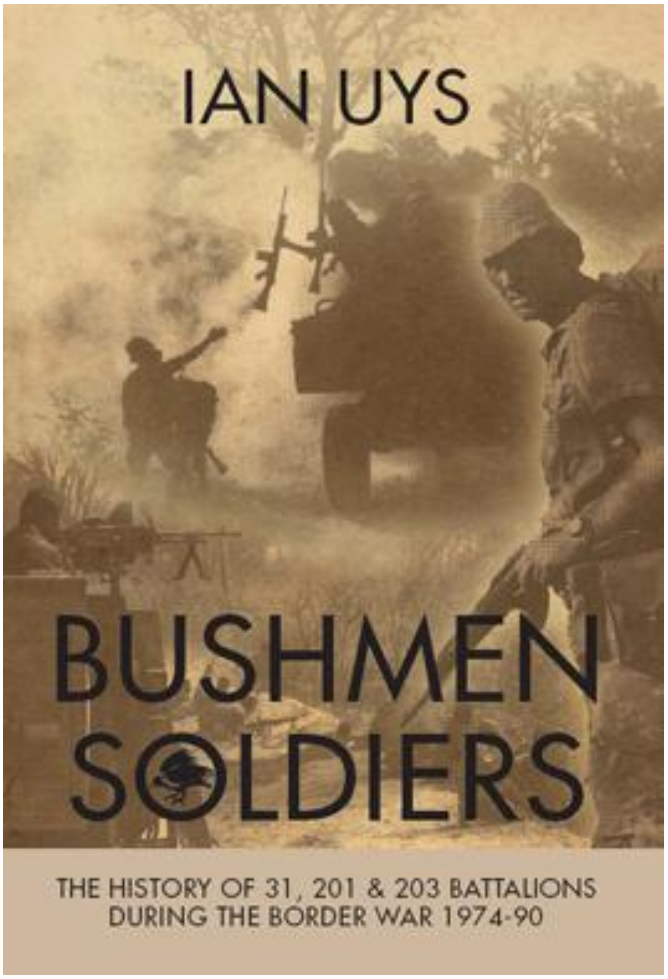

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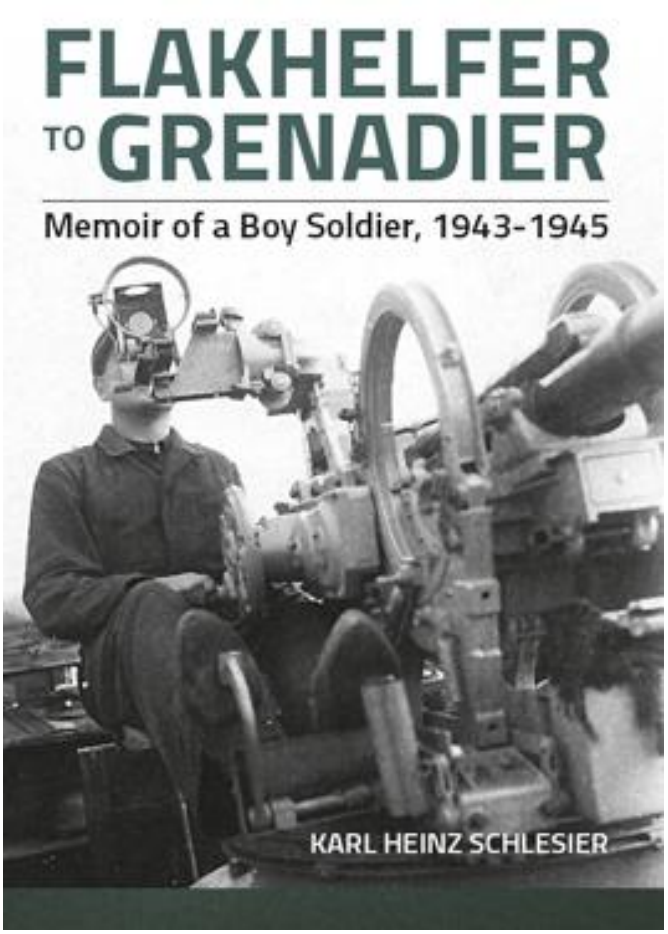

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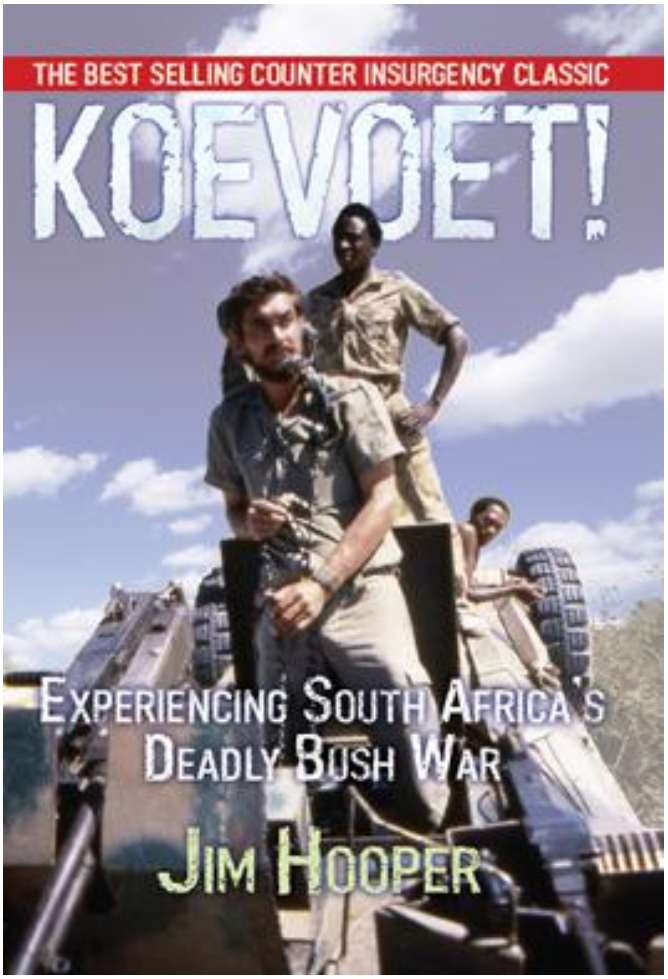

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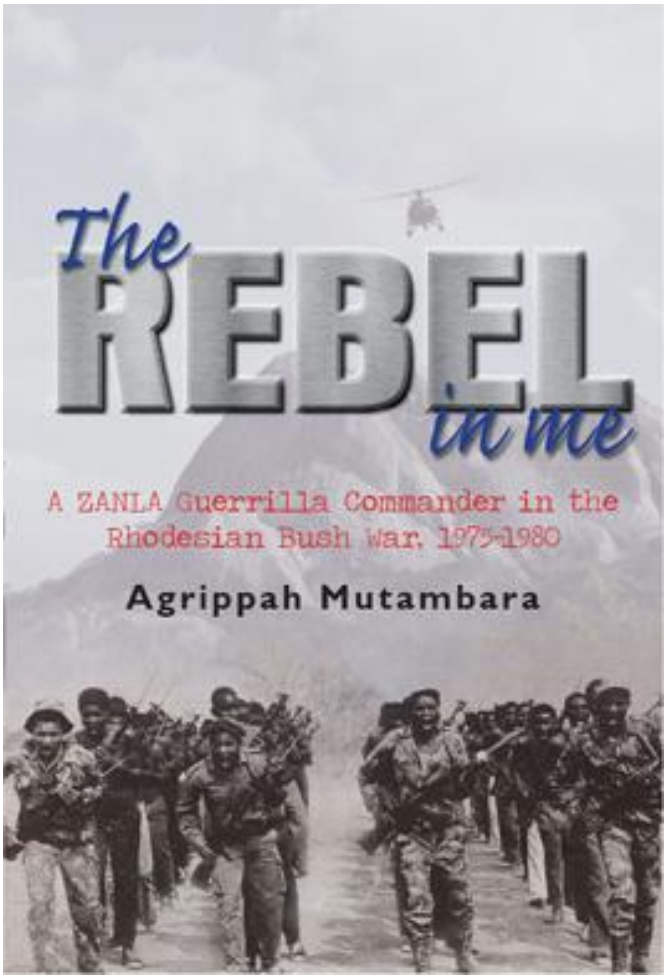

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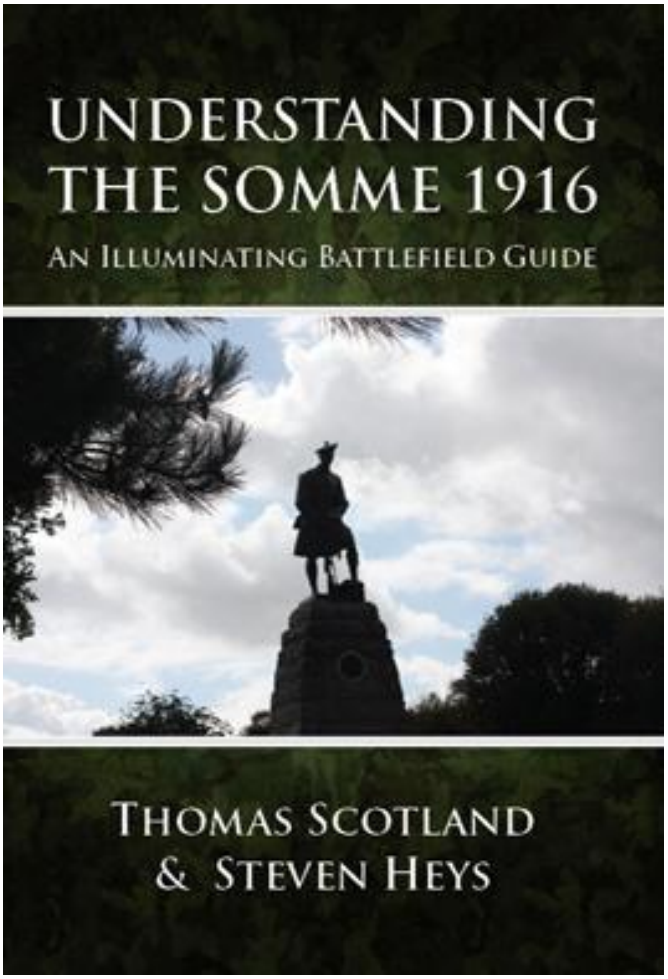

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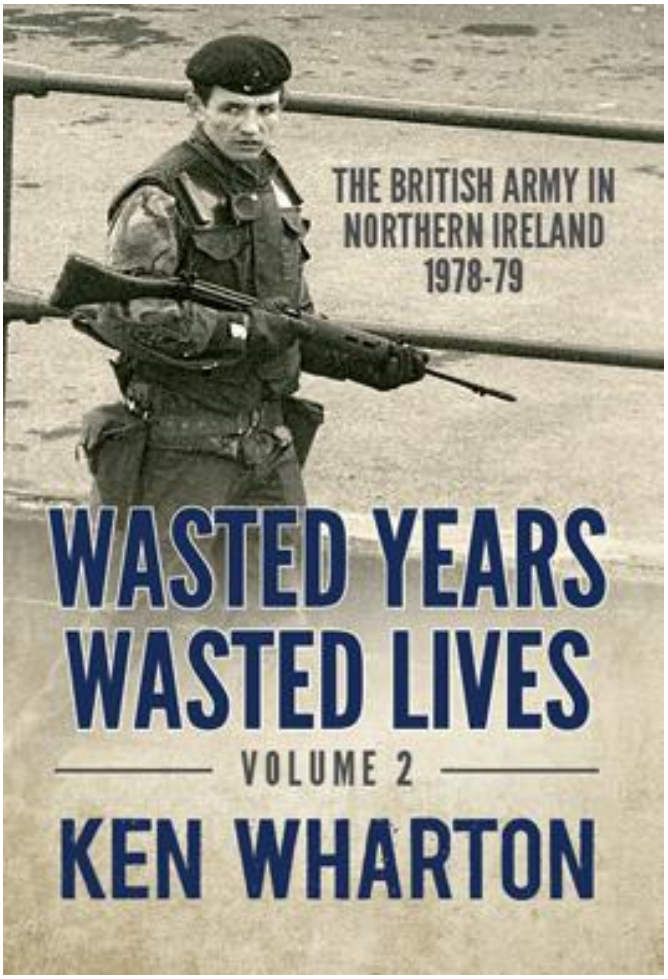

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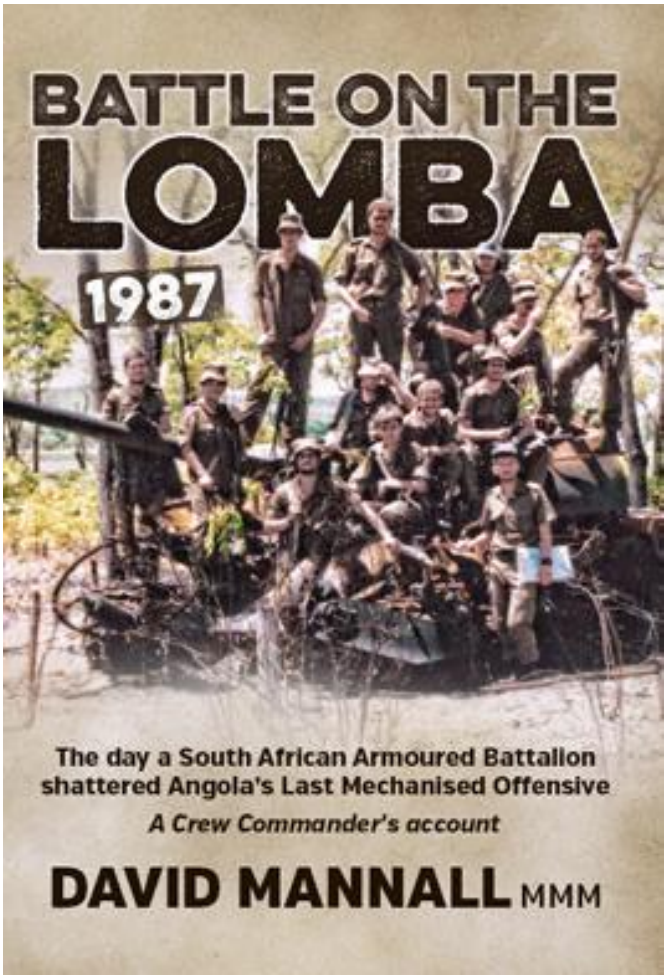

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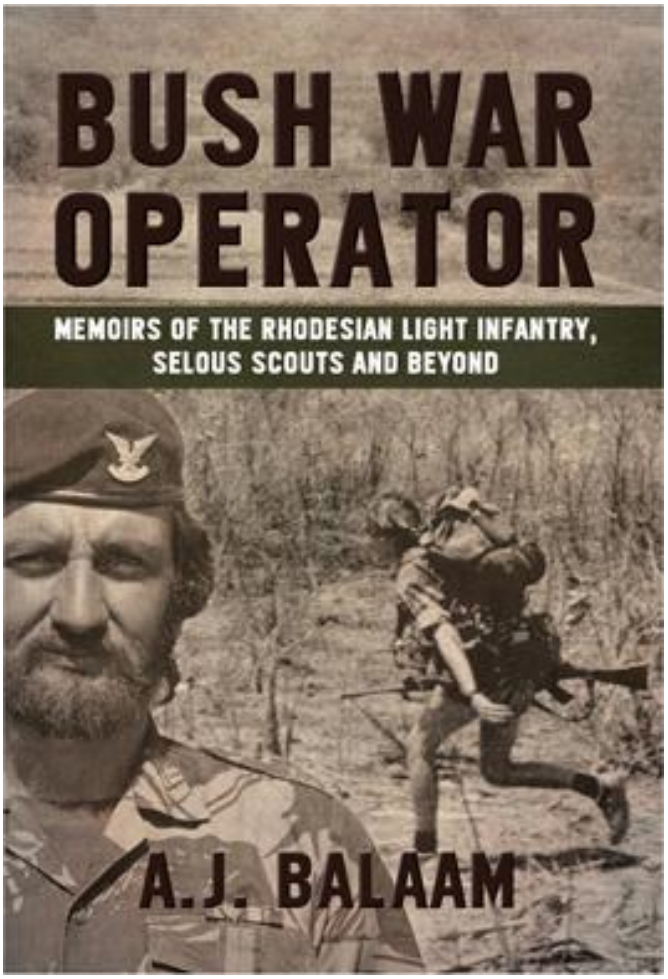

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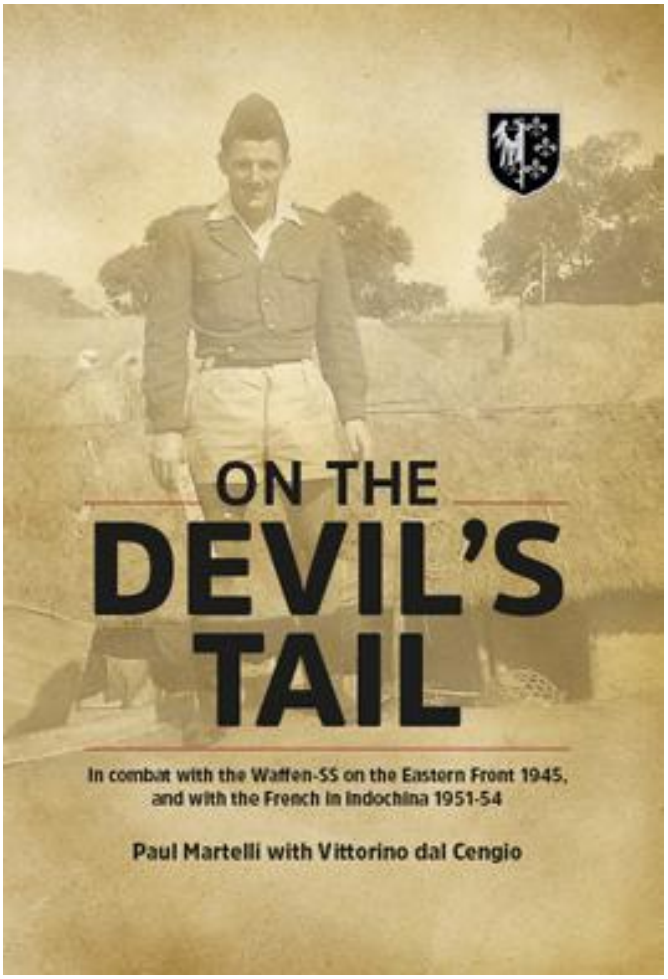
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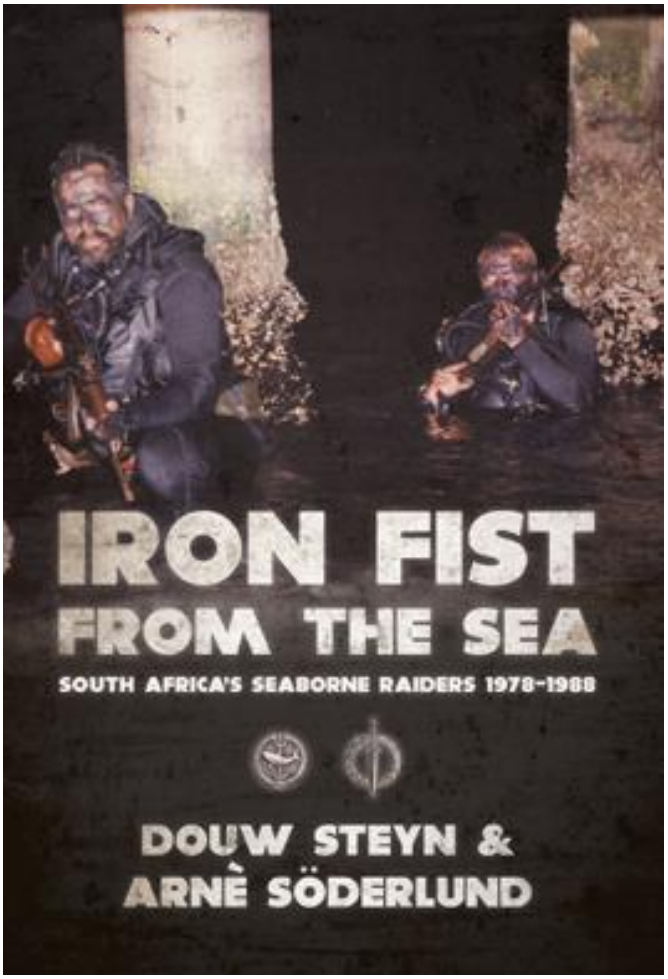

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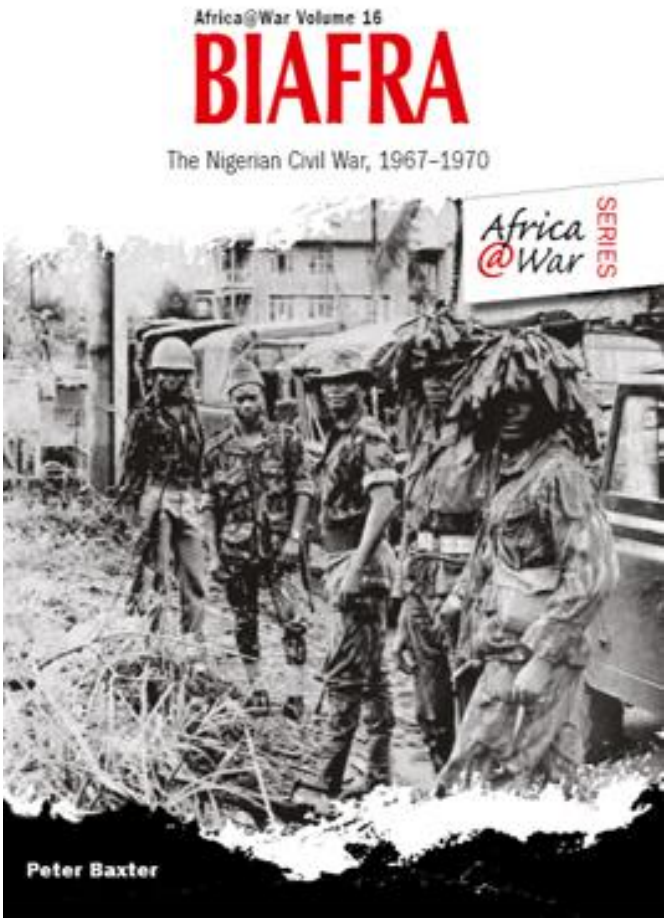

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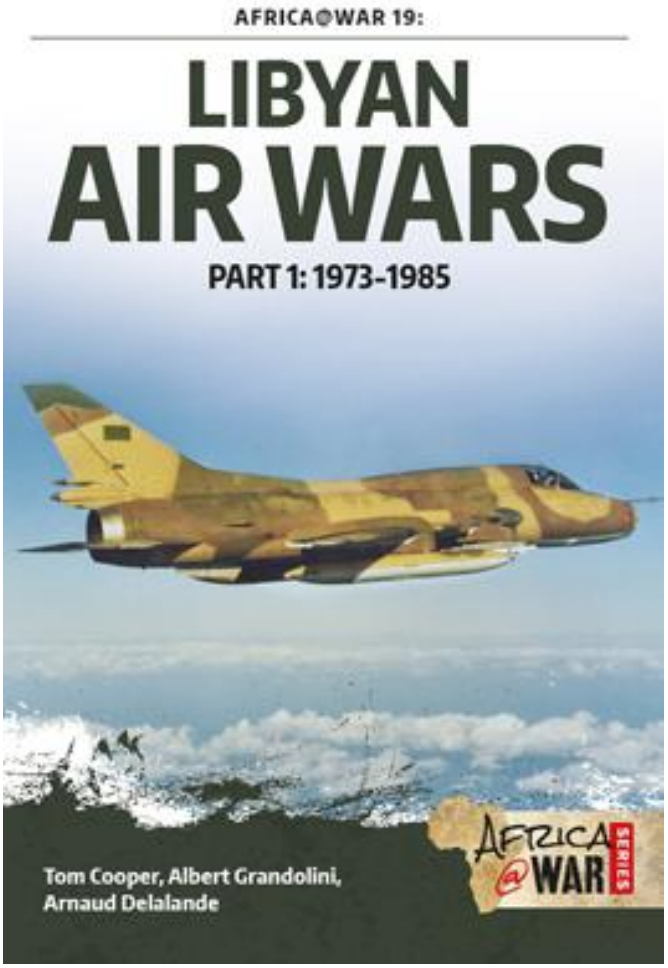

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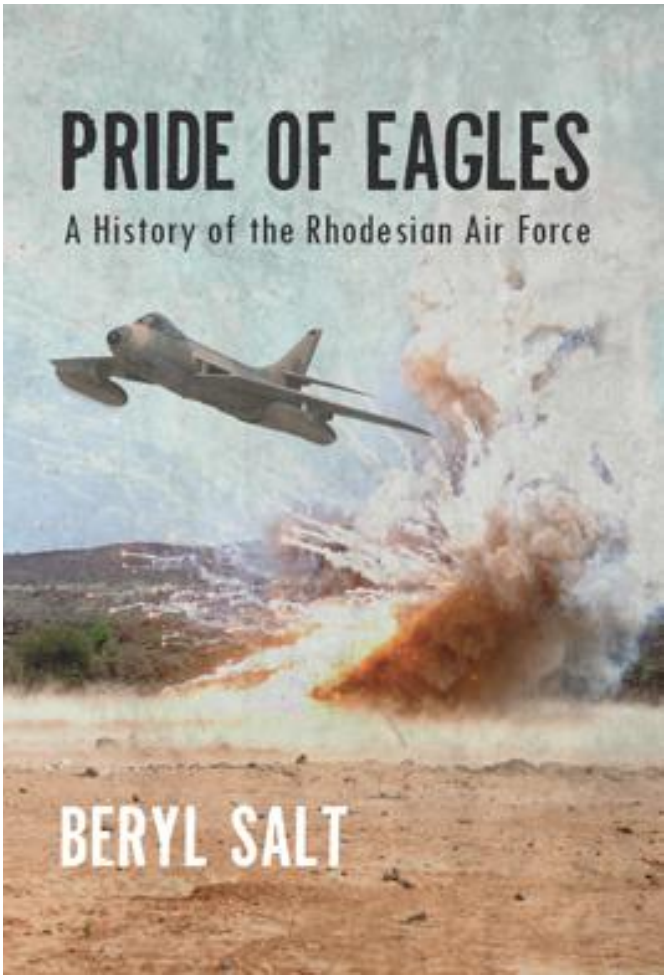

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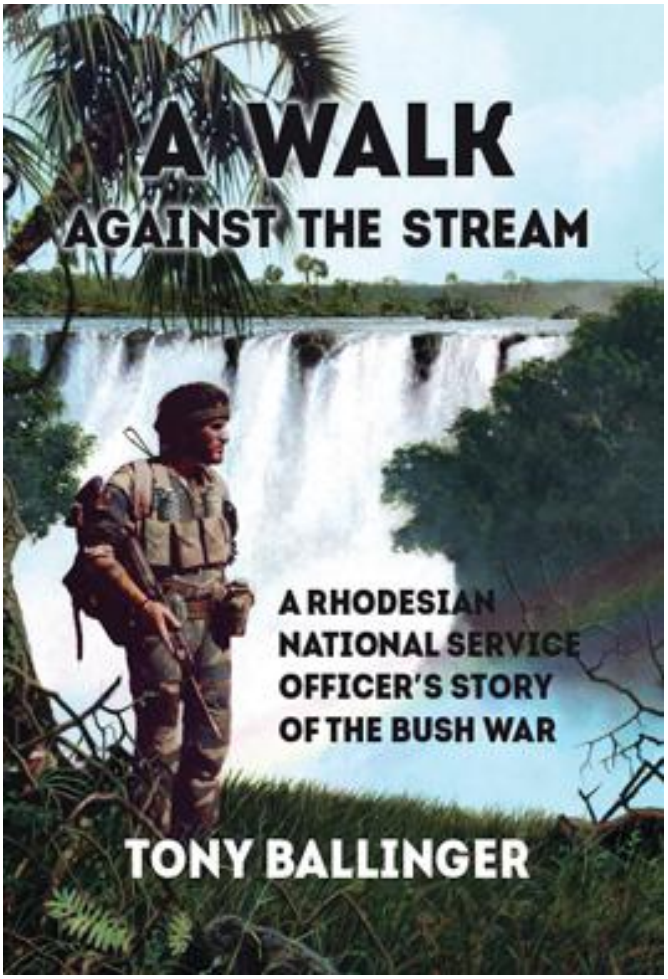

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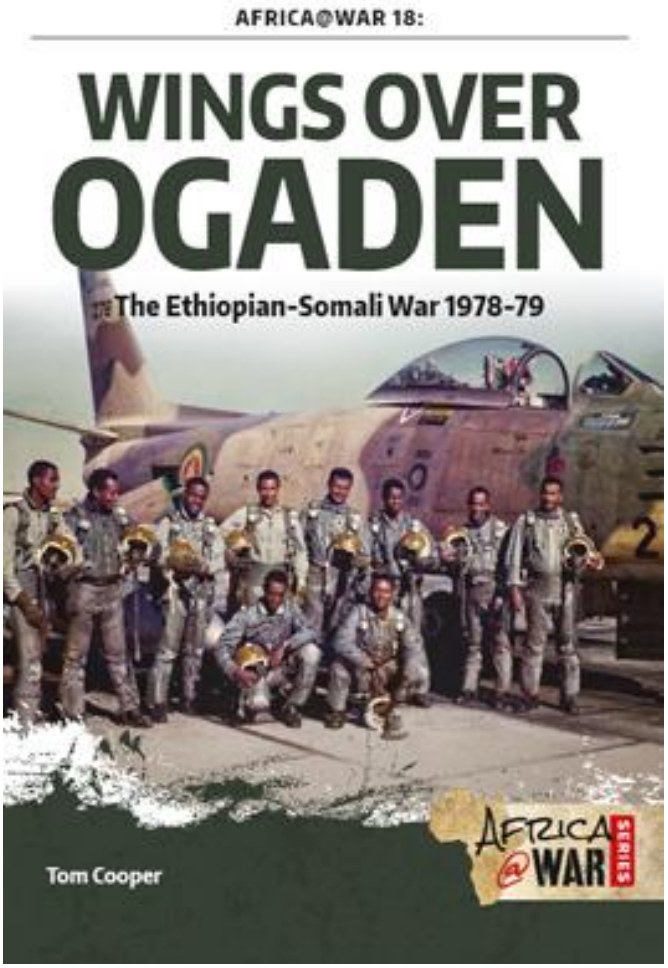

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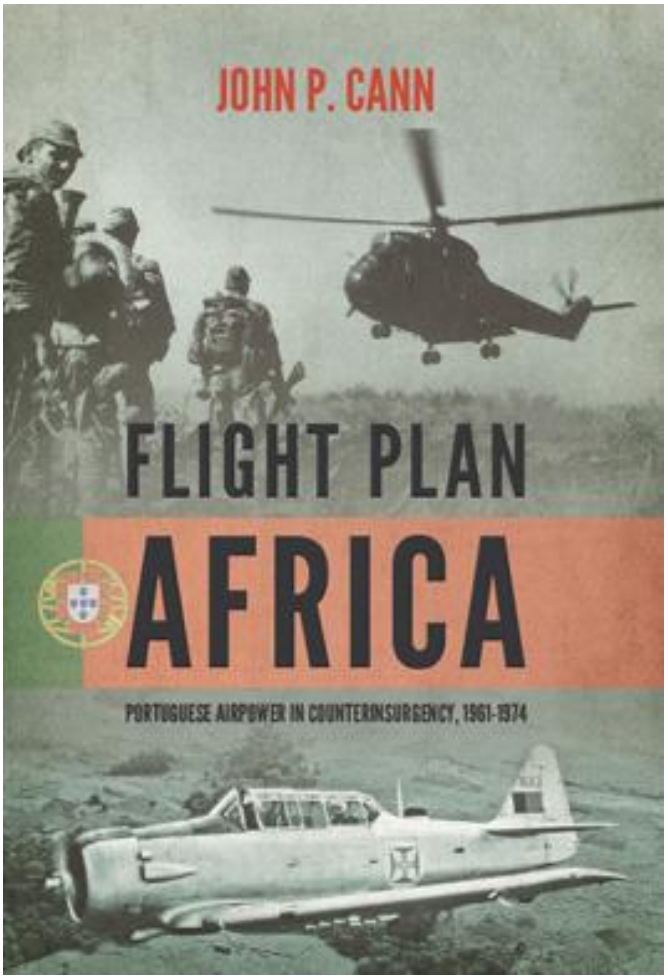

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